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TEENAGE KICKS

The kids following in Rooney's footsteps

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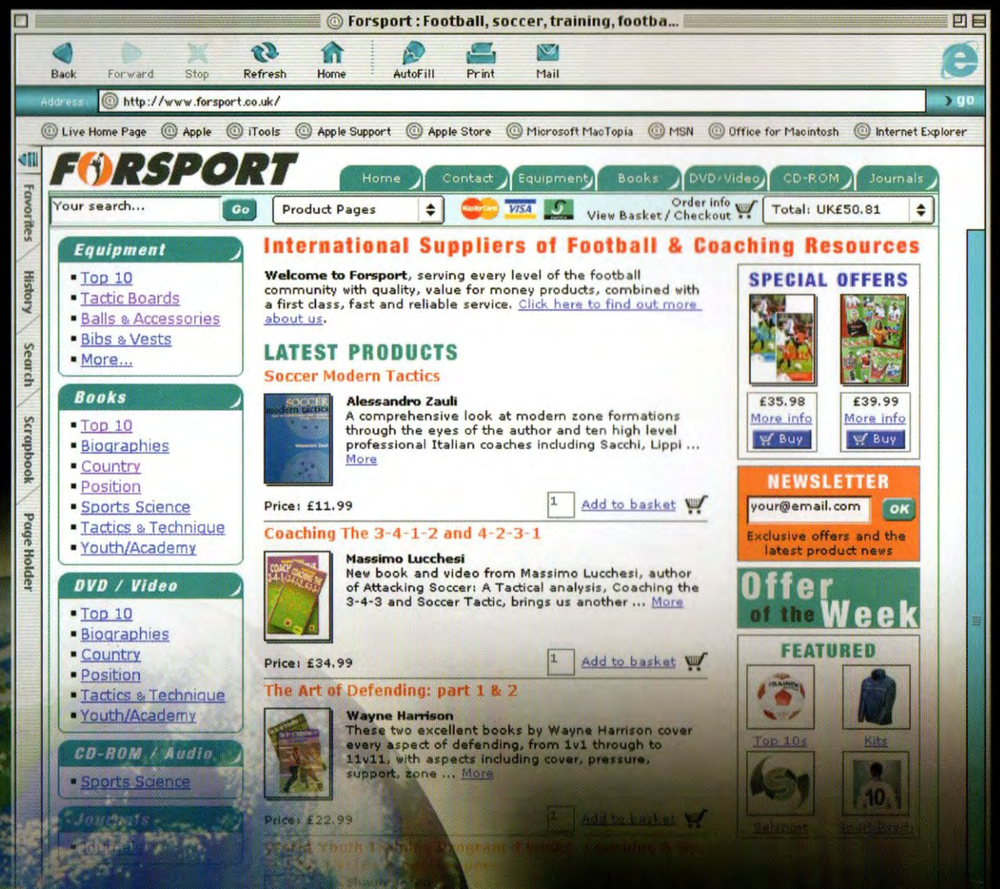

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February 2003

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COVER STORY: Milan
Focus on the team who have set the pace in Europe during the first half of the season. *Page* 10

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The brightest teenage prospects in the English game. *Page* 7

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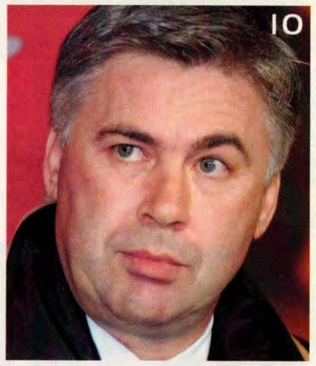


IT'S REFRESHING to be able to kick off 2003 with reports on two teams – Milan and Santos – who are achieving success through positive, attractive football. Milan (page 10) have been the team of the first half of the European season, playing a wonderful free-flowing game to dispel the doubters, ourselves included, who wondered how the likes of Rivaldo, Rui Costa and Andrea Pirlo could be included in the same starting eleven. The current Santos side (page 24) should be celebrated before the inevitable happens and their brightest jewels are sold to the highest European bidder. The performances of such young talents as Diego and Robinho, not to mention the conduct of coach Emerson Leao, have helped to restore many people's faith in Brazil as the spiritual home of football.

So it's a great shame that FIFA has effectively cut the number of 2006 World Cup places open to South America from six to four (five South American countries took part in last year's World Cup, while in the past Brazil would have qualified as holders, but they will now have to compete for one of four spots on offer). These changes have been made to accommodate extra places for Oceania (or rather Australia) and Asia. The cause of Asian football is surely better served by encouraging their best players to develop their game with the best clubs in Europe or (why not?) Latin America. Sending four rather than two Asian teams to the World Cup simply means that double the number of teams will now face the ritual humiliation that was meted out to Saudi Arabia and China last year. Some learning experience.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor (gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com)

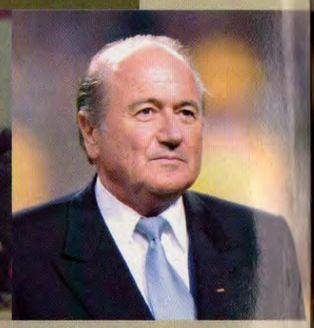
*** SAVE MONEY ON WORLD SOCCER SEE OUR SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER ON PAGE 22

The month in pictures

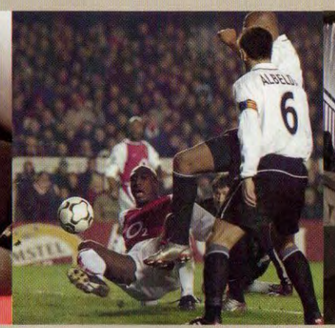
● 01/12/02...Manchester United's Diego Forlan taps in after a blunder by Liverpool's Jerzy Dudek

● 03/12/02...Real Madrid celebrate victory over Olimpia of Paraguay in the World Club Cup Final in Yokohama

● 03/12/02...Fernando Redondo returns for Milan after two years out through injury


● 04/12/02...FIFA president Sepp Blatter is cleared of any wrongdoing by the Zurich prosecutor

● 05/12/02...Man United chief Peter Kenyon calls for a cut in the number of pro clubs in England


● 10/12/02...Valencia hold Arsenal to a 0-0 draw at Highbury

● 10/12/02...Barcelona's Champions League game against Newcastle is postponed following torrential rain

Clean sweep for Ronaldo

Keir Radnedge reports from the FIFA gala in Madrid

Brief appearance...Ronaldo against the World XI in Madrid

RONALDO extended his Midas touch by adding the FIFA World Player award – for a record third time – to the many accolades bestowed upon him in recent months.

The Brazilian collected his award at a star-studded gala in Madrid before, the next day, briefly taking part in Real Madrid's match against a World XI to conclude the club's centenary celebrations.

The FIFA award was added to the European Footballer of the Year crown so conveniently cast in his direction just the previous day by *France Football*.

The French intent had been to steal FIFA's thunder in the awards battle that has been raging between the two for several years now. In fact, the tactic backfired since the fuss over the French European award was submerged beneath the weight of the world.

Ronaldo didn't mind. He wasn't even offended by a picture of him wearing a Barcelona shirt, on the section of the FIFA website dedicated to the Madrid gala.

In fact, Ronaldo had turned up almost an hour late for an award press conference – to the anger of his FIFA runner-up, Bayern Munich goalkeeper Oliver Kahn. Of course, Kahn had been punctual and was further irritated by Ronaldo's failure to offer a proper apology.

He had his revenge the next day by flying out of Madrid early to play golf with various German team-mates in Mallorca. That left Madrid officials desperately phoning round Europe for a replacement goalkeeper to join the World XI. Fulham's Dutchman, Edwin Van der Sar, had other commitments so the former Madrid keeper, Argentinian Albano Bizarri, stepped in.

Ronaldo played the first half before jogging off, weighed down, no doubt, by a ton of awards. He was a World Cup winner; he was the World Cup's top scorer; he was a World Club Cup winner and man of the match in Yokohama; he was voted foreign sports personality in the BBC awards, No 1 by the French sports academy as well as by French magazine *Onze* and, of course, here by *World Soccer*.

All he needs now is a Nobel Prize and an Oscar...plus the small matter of the Champions League.

Real Madrid's concept of wrapping up their centenary year with a celebration match against a World XI contained one fatal flaw: half the contenders for the opposition already consider the Estadio Bernabeu their footballing home.

Unable to call on the likes of Ronaldo, Zinedine Zidane and Raul – Roberto Carlos was injured – the rump of the world had a point to prove and led 3-0 before settling diplomatically for a 3-3 draw.

The Eriksson-style flood of substitutions had already begun before the World seized a 2-0 interval lead, through Germany's Miroslav Klose and his outstanding Brazilian replacement, Kaka.

Placido Domingo and an 85-piece orchestra provided half-time entertainment by singing the Madrid club anthem, which served only to inspire Birmingham City's Senegalese Aliou Cisse to extend the World XI's lead. Madrid restored home pride with three recovery goals.

No home victory on the night but Madrid have, this year, won the Champions League, the European Supercup and the World Club Cup – a happy enough return.

The only sound that could faintly be heard beyond the choruses of the club anthem, 'Hala Madrid', was the gnashing of teeth away in Catalonia, where Barcelona had suffered their worst League start in 61 years.

Madrid could not have stage-managed it better.

Match facts

DEC 18 - ESTADIO BERNABEU, MADRID

Real Madrid 3 (Solari pen 60, Tote 61, Cambiasso 86)
World XI 3 (Klose 30, Kaka 43, A Cisse 48)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 60,000. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez

Real Madrid: Casillas (Cesar 32; Carlos Sanchez 71) - Minambres (Olalla 71), Ivan Helguera (Ruben 46), Pavon (Borja 46), Raul Bravo - Flavio Conceicao (Celades 46), Guti (Portillo 46) - Figo (McManaman 32), Zidane (Solari 46) - Raul (Morientes 25; Cambiasso 71) - Ronaldo (Tote 46).
World XI: Cavallero (Bizarri 46) - Cafu (Cha Doo-ri 62), Maldini (Naybet 46), Marquez (M Yakin 46), Lizarazu (D'Alessandro 46) - Baraja (Joaquin 46), Ballack (A Cisse 46), H Nakata (Torres 46) - Rivaldo (Wilmots 32) - Klose (Kaka 32; Mijatovic 61), R Baggio (Makaay 32; Eto'o 62).

ESM EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES

TEAM OF THE MONTH

December 2002

Kahn (Bayern Munich, 5 votes)
Stam (Lazio, 3)
Van Buyten (Marseille, 3)
Maldini (Milan, 4)
Karpin (Real Sociedad, 3)
Di Biagio (Internazionale, 3)
Veron (Manchester United, 3)
Fiore (Lazio, 3)
Kezman (PSV, 5)
Raul (Real Madrid, 3)
Claudio Lopez (Lazio, 5)

HOW THEY VOTED

A BOLA (POR)
Barthez (Manchester United)
Thuram (Juventus)
Mihajlovic (Lazio)
Maldini (Milan)
Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid)
Camoranesi (Juventus)
Zidane (Real Madrid)
Nihat (Real Sociedad)
Makaay (Dep La Coruna)
Ronaldo (Real Madrid)
Ibrahimovic (Ajax)

FOOT (BLG)
Kahn (Bayern Munich)
Song (Lens)
Van Buyten (Marseille)
Maldini (Milan)
Karpin (Real Sociedad)
Veron (Manchester United)
Fiore (Lazio)
Zikos (Monaco)
Ailton (Werder Bremen)
Van Nistelrooy (Man United)
Henry (Arsenal)

KICKER (GER)
Kahn (Bayern Munich)
Campbell (Arsenal)
Stam (Lazio)
Maldini (Milan)
Di Biagio (Internazionale)
Gilberto Silva (Arsenal)
Veron (Manchester United)
Raul (Real Madrid)
Claudio Lopez (Lazio)
Kovacevic (Real Sociedad)
Ailton (Werder Bremen)

SPORT EXPRESS (RUS)
Kahn (Bayern Munich)
Verlaat (Werder Bremen)
Maldini (Milan)
Stubbs (Everton)
Pires (Arsenal)
Karpin (Real Sociedad)
Emre (Internazionale)
Fiore (Lazio)
Vieri (Internazionale)
Kezman (PSV)
Raul (Real Madrid)

DON BALON (SPA)
Pelizzoli (Roma)
Nesta (Milan)
Gallas (Chelsea)
Van Buyten (Marseille)
Camoranesi (Juventus)
Fiore (Lazio)
Raul (Real Madrid)
Pires (Arsenal)
Claudio Lopez (Lazio)
Kezman (PSV)
Van Nistelrooy (Man United)

GAZZETTA DELLO SPORT (ITA)
Kahn (Bayern Munich)
Michel Salgado (R Madrid)
Nesta (Milan)
Verlaat (Werder Bremen)
Roberto Carlos (R Madrid)
Geremi (Middlesbrough)
Zidane (Real Madrid)
Di Biagio (Internazionale)
Kezman (PSV)
Ronaldo (Real Madrid)
Claudio Lopez (Lazio)

VOETBAL INTERNATIONAL (HOL)
Kahn (Bayern Munich)
Stam (Lazio)
Van Buyten (Marseille)
Campbell (Arsenal)
Karpin (Real Sociedad)
Di Biagio (Internazionale)
Veron (Manchester United)
Emre (Internazionale)
Claudio Lopez (Lazio)
Kezman (PSV)
Makaay (Dep La Coruna)

WORLD SOCCER (UK)
Cudicini (Chelsea)
Yobo (Everton)
Stam (Lazio)
Chivu (Ajax)
Roberto Carlos (R Madrid)
Camoranesi (Juventus)
Claudio Lopez (Lazio)
P Neville (Man United)
Kezman (PSV)
Zola (Chelsea)
Shevchenko (Milan)

Notes & quotes

"I can't wait to play with my real name on my back."
After being suspended for possessing a false passport, Chievo's Brazilian midfielder Luciano, formerly known as Eriberto, has his sentence reduced by the Italian Olympic Committee and can play again from late January.

Money matters...Lazio's Claudio Lopez

"I don't want to make waves but if you work, you expect to be paid."
Lazio's in-form Argentinian attacker Claudio Lopez on the lack of pay cheques at the cash-strapped Roman club.

"He tried to sabotage me in every way possible. I'm happy to be at Real and that Inter are happy with their Argentinian players."
Ronaldo insists Inter coach Hector Cuper was the reason he quit the San Siro.

"Galatasaray need help from third parties to win some games."
Gaziantepspor president Celal Dogan blames referee Mustafa Culcu for his team's 2-1 home loss to Gala.

The month in pictures

● 11/12/02...Milan continue their good run of form in the Champions League with a 1-0 win away to Dortmund

● 11/12/02...Manchester United run out 2-0 winners over Deportivo La Coruna at Old Trafford

● 12/12/02...Malaga celebrate a 2-1 win over Leeds in the UEFA Cup third round

● 12/12/02...Martin O'Neill takes the applause after Celtic's UEFA Cup triumph over Celta Vigo

● 15/12/02...Lazio maintain their 100 per cent away record with a 2-1 win in Turin over Juventus

● 17/12/02...Ronaldo is named FIFA World Player of the Year in Madrid

● 18/12/02...Real Madrid complete their centenary celebrations with a 3-3 draw against a World XI

GLOBAL VIEW
Paul Gardner

The beautiful world of Roly Aguilera, RIP

THE Beautiful Game, Pele called it. Far too often these days, it's anything but beautiful. From endless squabbles and sordidness at the top end, through the thickening corruption and selfishness that comes with too much money, down to Lee Bowyer standing on an opponent's head...you've got to look pretty hard to discern beauty.

Yet a sad recent occasion flooded my mind with beautiful memories. Roly Aguilera died in December, and the soccer world is much the poorer without him.

No, he wasn't exactly one of the sport's superstars. But he should have been. In 1978 Aguilera, a Bolivian businessman and politician, returned to Santa Cruz after a seven-year forced exile. The son of one of Bolivia's most revered players and an ex-pro himself, Aguilera was upset that his two young sons, while in exile, had little chance to play the sport.

He hired a Brazilian coach to give them lessons. That's all there was to it – except that the idea turned into something so much greater. Relatives wanted to join in, then friends, then total strangers.

This was totally unforeseen, far beyond anything Roly had imagined. Yet in a mysterious way, he was ready for what was happening. Thus was his boys' club, Tahuichi, born. He put an ad in the paper announcing the new club, and over 200 boys, mostly poor kids, turned up at his home, shy little boys with eager, soccer-loving eyes.

Roly spent his own money to pay the coaches, to rent facilities. It took just two years for him to decide that Tahuichi was ready for international competition. A team of 14-year-olds went down to Argentina where they beat youth teams from the top clubs in Uruguay and Brazil and, in the Final, swept past Argentina's Independiente 4-1.

Suddenly, Bolivia – South America's poorest, least successful country – had its heroes. A bunch of smiling little ragamuffins – but what football they played! The headline in the Argentinian magazine *Goles* said simply "You Have to See Tahuichi."

Since then Tahuichi teams of various ages have travelled the world, winning most of the tournaments they enter such as the Gothia Cup, the Dana Cup, the Ian Rush Cup and the Dallas Cup.

A wonderful record, but not the whole story. We come to the beauty that Roly Aguilera created, the magnificent, majestic, flowing football that these boys played – and still play. Football that looks like fun, that enchants everyone who sees it. On several occasions Roly told me, at length – at boring length, I have to say – just how Tahuichi did it. The discussions got technical and I only half-listened, because it always seemed to me Tahuichi's success owed more to indefinables than to tactics and organisation.

I mean the style of Tahuichi's success. Since 1982 I have seen them play a hundred or more times, at different age levels. Whatever the result, not one of those games has been anything less than stimulating. Tahuichi always come to play, to score goals. They do it with verve, with skill, with artistry, with flair and with joy, and they have been doing it that way for over 20 years.

When the English journalist David Lacey saw Tahuichi in August 1989, he wrote in *The Guardian*: "Pound for pound and inch for inch, the quality of their play will be one of the sweetest sights seen on any English football ground during the coming season."

I think the excitement of Tahuichi came directly from Roly. Yes, he knew the importance of rigorous training, of proper diet, of correct behaviour. But he also knew, in a much less conscious way, what he was looking for in players and in coaches.

Instinctively, he found the people who could bring his vision of soccer to life. He was at his most joyous after Tahuichi had beaten some major opponent. Then, with sparkling eyes and grinning madly, he would describe how it was done. No technical talk now – he would move his hands with little jerky motions and mutter "Toc! Toc! Toc!" and the imaginary ball would move swiftly and beautifully from one Tahuichi player to another.

It can't have been easy coaching for Roly. He would be on the touchline, alongside the coach. I was there, too, once. Roly demanded of the coach: "Why isn't Castillo on the field?" The coach, warily: "I will put him in later." Roly, eyes glaring: "He should be in now. REFEREE! Substitution!" So in went Castillo – and Roly was right, of course. Castillo scored two goals in five minutes (the same Castillo who won the world goalscoring title in 2001).

Tahuichi became more than soccer. It has provided career opportunities for hundreds of boys, including some 30 who have attended American universities on soccer scholarships. There are now ex-Tahuichis playing professionally in Spain, Japan, Germany, Mexico and the United States. From its cramped downtown Santa Cruz headquarters, the club moved out to the city's perimeter, where it is slowly building a complex of facilities and fields. It is there that Roly's son Rolito will take over the running of the club.

Roly helped boys, he helped families, he helped Santa Cruz, he helped Bolivia...and for tens of thousands of fans around the world his teams left unforgettable memories of The Beautiful Game played the way it should be played. Toc! Toc! Toc! How simple and beautiful it all looks.

'Tahuichi, the boys' club Roly created, played magnificent, majestic football – and still do. It looks like fun and enchants everyone who sees it'

Talent scout ENGLAND

John Holmesdale selects 10 of the brightest teenage prospects in the English game

Stunning start...Wayne Rooney

WAYNE ROONEY
(Born: 24.10.85. Club: Everton)
Striker who has made an incredible impact in the space of a few weeks since making his Everton debut and could now be included in England's senior squad to play Australia at West Ham in February. Has been criticised (unfairly) for his slovenly appearance on the BBC sports review of the year; Everton will be far more concerned by the yellow cards (five so far this season) and their failure to so far agree with agents on the terms of his first professional contract.

JAMES MILNER
(04.01.86, Leeds)
Eclipsed Rooney's record as the Premiership's youngest scorer with a goal against Sunderland on Boxing Day, aged 16 and 356 days. Like Rooney, he appears older than his tender years, but manager Terry Venables says: "He's very sure of himself, without being too cocky, and he is a pleasure to work with. He has very quick feet, he can play on the right or left and can turn people very quickly."

MICHAEL DAWSON
(18.11.83, Nottingham Forest)
Central defender who has already trained with the full England squad. His team-mate Des Walker, the former international, believes he will go all the way to the top.

JAMES McEVELEY
(02.11.85, Blackburn)
Liverpool-born left-sided defender who combines confidence and skill with hunger and tenacity.

Record breaker...James Milner

ANTON FERDINAND
(18.02.85, West Ham)
Defender and younger brother of Rio. He is said to have all the qualities to follow in his brother's footsteps.

DARREN FLETCHER
(01.02.84, Manchester United)
Scotland-born midfielder who is seen as the brightest prospect to have come through the Old Trafford youth ranks for some time.

GARY O'NEIL
(18.05.83, Portsmouth)
England Under-20 midfielder whose playmaking skills have come to the fore in Pompey's push for promotion.

DARREN AMBROSE
(29.02.84, Ipswich)
The latest product of Ipswich's highly-rated youth system, a confident midfield all-rounder who also pops up to score goals.

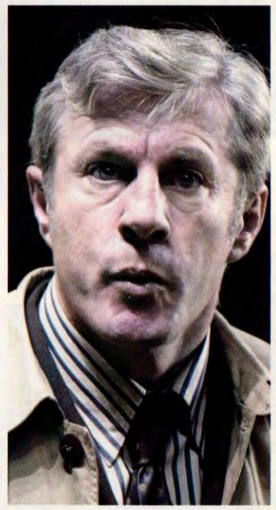
MICHAEL TONGE
(07.04.83, Sheffield United)
Former Manchester United trainee now being watched closely by Premiership scouts after some sparkling midfield displays in his club's League Cup run.

STEFAN MOORE
(28.09.83, Aston Villa)
Powerful centre-forward who scored twice in Villa's 2002 FA Youth Cup Final triumph over Everton and...Wayne Rooney.

Notes & quotes

"The popularity of football in both Switzerland and Austria is going to rocket."
Swiss national team coach Kobi Kuhn after the Alpine nations were awarded the 2008 European Championship.

"PSG needs peace and quiet. The fans and the players are behind me."
...but much-criticised Paris Saint-Germain coach Luis Fernandez forgets to mention the less-than-solid backing of his board.



Not the whole story...Luis Fernandez

"I want to protect my family and my private life. I want to work against this pop star image of myself."
Germany defender Christoph Metzelder on the demands of fame following the World Cup.

The month in pictures

● 19/12/02...Hans-Peter Briegel is appointed new coach of Albania

● 19/12/02...Aston Villa apologise for the ticket fiasco that delayed their League Cup tie against Liverpool by 80 minutes

● 20/12/02...The FA refuses to confirm reports that Mark Bosnich has tested positive for cocaine

● 03/01/03...Birmingham unveil new signing Christophe Dugarry as the transfer window opens

● 03/01/03...Under-fire Gerard Houllier receives the support of the Liverpool board

● 03/01/03...Unhappy Juventus striker David Trezeguet is linked with Barcelona

● 04/01/03...Shrewsbury players celebrate a famous FA Cup victory over Everton

Keir Radnedge
MEDIAWORLD

Leicester keep press on their side

LEICESTER CITY, all things considered, get a pretty good press – and it's no accident.

Other clubs' directors and managements would have been crucified by Fleet Street after crashing out of the Premiership and not only down into the First Division but into administration.

But Leicester have one saving grace – a massive one. Their match-day arrangements for the media are not merely first-class, they are European competition standard.

A roomy press box with the sort of working space demanded by today's laptop-encumbered reporters; press room facilities close to the tunnel; formal conference facilities; even a FIFA and UEFA-style 'mixed zone' for access to players after a match.

Paul Mace, who set up Leicester so superbly, is now bringing the same organisational standards to West Bromwich Albion – so watch their press coverage even in relegation-threatened circumstances.

Reporters will write whatever they think about a club and a match but the terms in which criticism may be couched can be eased in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance, if not always respect.

Other clubs have lots to learn. At Birmingham City, for example, basic press facilities have not changed since I first went there as a reporter 30 years ago. Well, that's an exaggeration: paint has been applied and electric power points have been provided, but there's no more working space and post-match facilities have nose-dived.

Not that media care is erratic only in England. One Fleet Street reporter at Real Madrid's centenary match was left speechless by the lack of information available at the legendary home of the European champions. All that was on offer was one single photocopied sheet of white A4 listing simple surnames of players and substitutes.

At least Madrid are addressing the issue. The next stage of redevelopment at the Bernabeu will see the press box removed from the long high cliff atop the west stand to the opposite side of the ground.

Then media and players would at least be on the same side.

Speaking out for value...Cruyff

The cost of thinking big

"In economic terms, 90 per cent of clubs are badly run. The greatest sin is not paying big money for a superstar but paying too much for a mediocre player. Squads today are stuffed with overpaid mediocrities.

"The clubs only realise when it comes to selling them. I laugh out loud when I read that a player is a bargain because he has been signed on the cheap. The saving on the transfer fee is lost in inflated wages. The problem has been aggravated by the increase in size of squads.

"If you can only put 11 players on the pitch at any one time, why do you need 25? That means 14 aren't playing; 14 players whose value is sinking as they sit there. My ideal squad would comprise 19 senior professionals and six or seven from the youth team who could be called up to lend a hand now and again. And, of those 19, only a maximum six or seven would be foreigners. That would be good for both club economics and national teams."

– Johan Cruyff in **Marca**

Two sides of Ronnie

"What will we remember about 2002? In sporting terms, Brazil, Real Madrid and Ronaldo have come through as winners, respectively champions of the world at national team level, champions of the world at club level and champion of the world at national team and club level and of fans' hearts. Miracle Ronnie he became for a majority, while a minority called him Traitor Ronnie for the cavalier fashion in which he abandoned Internazionale for Madrid. Ronaldo thus held up a mirror to the two faces of today's football, representative of a confusion of values, both angel and demon.

"In these early years of a new century, football does not know where to call home. It is wandering in search of an address that is neither business, nor brand, nor factory nor stock exchange. Still less should football be a toy in the hands of a mafia. Shouldn't its real home still be considered the stadium?"

– Gerard Ernault's New Year editorial in **France Football**

Sven's selfish side

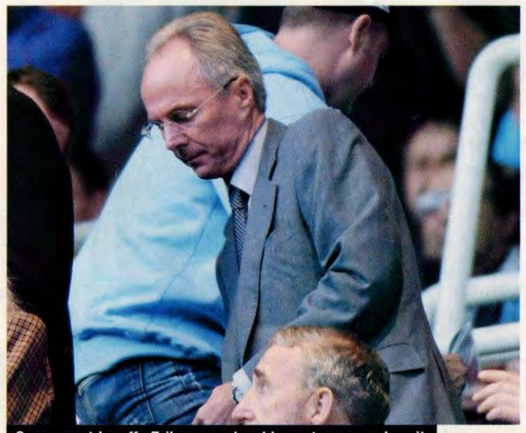
"Sven Goran Eriksson must go. It gives me no pleasure to write this. I have long been one of the Swede's staunchest allies. I even stood by him during the darkest moment of Ulrikagate.

"But the moment came when my colleague Richard Williams revealed that the England coach likes to leave matches 10 minutes early to avoid the traffic.

"This horrific detail will have had every right-minded fan choking on his or her half-time coffee. Ever since the ownership of motor vehicles became widespread the last 10 minutes of matches in this country have been blighted by supporters like Eriksson; the games played out to a clatter of flip-up seats as the middle-aged, car-coat-sporting hordes begin their quest to get home in time for *Family Fortunes*.

"Selfishly destroying the atmosphere and blocking everyone's view, such people are nothing more than a livid rash on the face of the beautiful game."

– Harry Pearson in **The Guardian**


Sorry, must be off...Eriksson makes his customary early exit

Old viewing habits die hard

"The complaint that 'too much football on TV kills football' has been heard again. Regular falls in Champions League average audiences in several countries appear to underline this trend. However, these results show, rather, a drop in interest in a formula often judged too long even by the game itself.

"In countries whose clubs do well, figures remain high. More than 10 million viewers in Spain watched Real Madrid's victory last May and 12.4m German viewers watched Bayer Leverkusen lose the same Final. This competition continues to represent high potential, even more so when the format is tightened from the 2003-04 season. World Cup figures also leave no doubt about football as a high-level TV attraction at international level. Our studies show that in Germany, who reached the Final, ZDF obtained an 88 per cent market share while RAI obtained 82.7 per cent even in Italy.

"Viewer interest did not decline in France despite the holders' early exit. Large numbers then followed Senegal and more than 11m watched the Final, which did not feature a nation with any direct French interest."

– TV survey from **Eurodata**

A Christmas message

"At Christmas 1914 English and German soldiers mixed together around a football in no-man's land. Their senior officers tried to call them back to remind them that their duty was to kill each other. But for a few minutes in those few metres between trenches not yet flooded by the butchery still to come, a little sign of humanity broke through. Almost 80 years later football can still offer the world a fragile note of peace."

– Didier Braun in **L'Equipe**

WORLD SOCCER/CNN CLUB OF THE MONTH POLL

1 (7=)	Real Madrid
2 (1)	Milan
3 (2)	Arsenal
4 (3)	Internazionale
5 (10)	Real Sociedad
6 (-)	Santos
7 (7=)	Manchester United
8 (-)	FC Porto
9 (-)	Lazio
10 (5)	Valencia

(last month's position in brackets)

Obituaries

ONE of the last links with the great River Plate team of the late 1940s has been broken with the death at 80 of FELIX LOUSTAU.

Many veteran Argentinian observers have always considered Loustau the greatest outside-left of all time, although he played at a time when Argentinians had little opportunity to shine on the world stage.

His fame was built through his contribution to the successes of *La Maquina* and its legendary forward line, which also comprised Juan Carlos Munoz, Jose Manuel Moreno, Adolfo Pedernera and Angel Labruna. Later, a young Alfredo Di Stefano was introduced at centre-forward after Pedernera's departure for Colombia.

Loustau, born on April 25, 1922, played only for River, between 1940 and 1957. He won eight league titles with the 'Millonarios' and scored 101 goals in 365 games. His short build earned him the nickname of 'Chaplin' but he more than made up with his pace and dribbling skills. Loustau was proud of the era in which he played. Asked years later to judge Diego Maradona, he said: "Maradona is talented but in my time there were a hundred equally good."

Ready to pounce...Liverpool's Stubbins

ALBERT STUBBINS, one of Liverpool's most popular players, has died aged 83. Stubbins scored 237 goals – including 29 hat-tricks – in 218 appearances for Newcastle between 1937 and 1946 before a record (£12,500) move to Liverpool and a further 83 goals in 180 games. He also appeared on the cover of the Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* LP.

JURGEN NEUMANN, former captain of Kaiserslautern, has died of a heart attack aged 61.

JOEL ANTONIO MARTINS, who won the World Cup with Brazil in 1958, has died aged 71. Martins played 404 times for Flamengo, scoring 115 goals, before a move to Valencia in Spain.

Great expectations...the massed ranks of Milan fans have Champions League and Serie A triumphs in mind after their new-look team's scintillating start to the season

Forward thinking

Attacking football is back in fashion in Italy. Paddy Agnew reports

'So far, there is no doubt it has been a positive season. However, it's in June that you get judged'
Carlo Ancelotti

ACCORDING to end-of-year horoscopes, Milan will win this season's Serie A title. Given that by the time the New Year came around, Milan were not only joint top of Serie A (with Inter) but had also collected the Champions League scalps of Deportivo La Coruna, Bayern Munich, Real Madrid and Borussia Dortmund, then you could argue that the horoscope experts were hardly sticking their necks out.

Likewise, it would be stretching things to suggest that Milan's excellent autumn has come as a major surprise. After all, the once all-dominant club had given a fair indication of their competitive ambitions with a busy transfer campaign during which they landed such big fish as Brazilian World Cup winner Rivaldo, Lazio's Italian international defender Alessandro Nesta, Danish World Cup star Jon Dahl Tomasson (Feyenoord), Italian international Francesco Coco (Barcelona) and Dutchman Clarence Seedorf (Inter).

That transfer campaign had, in part at least, been inspired by the club's all-powerful owner, current Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who last summer ordered his long-serving aide, Adriano Galliani, to assemble a squad that would not only prove successful but capable of winning in style.

Even Berlusconi, Galliani and coach Carlo Ancelotti, however, must have been more than pleasantly surprised by the alacrity with which the new-look Milan set about their business both in Serie A and the Champions League. Much-changed squads usually take time to get their act together, yet Milan hit it off immediately, signalling their new-found competitive edge loud and clear with an emphatic 4-0 destruction of Deportivo in late September.

"I don't think anyone expected us to get going quite so quickly. After all, we started off with lots of question marks; above all the ability of so many big-name players to play together," said Ancelotti in late December. "That win in La Coruna really gave us an idea of our capabilities, especially when the Spanish fans applauded us off the pitch. Mind you, our best win so far this season was the away one against Bayern Munich."

After a year marked by dismal Italian performances both in the Champions League and all too obviously in the World Cup, Milan appear to be leading a major Italian renaissance. Their flowing, skilful, possession-based football seems light years away from the negative, over-cautious attitude that marked such recent Italian flops as that by the *Azzurri* against South Korea or that of Roma against Liverpool in the Champions League last spring.

The reality about this Milan squad, of course, was that the 'new boys' were joining a unit that already contained Ukrainian Andrii Shevchenko and Filippo Inzaghi in attack, Andrea Pirlo, Gennaro Gattuso, Massimo Ambrosini, Brazilian Serginho and Portugal's Rui Costa in midfield, and Paolo Maldini, Georgian Kakha Kaladze, Argentinian Jose Chamot and Brazilian Roque Junior in defence.

Significantly, much of the initial Milan success has been linked to the excellent form shown by some of the above-mentioned, longer-term Milan players. By the end of December, Inzaghi had scored 19 Champions League and Serie A goals in 22 games, Pirlo had proved an unexpected success in his new role of deep-lying midfield schemer, Rui Costa had shown his best form in over 18 months, Ambrosini had played his way back into the Italian team, while 34-year-old Maldini was still rated good enough to earn a place in the ideal World XI for 2002 named by French sports daily *L'Equipe*.

Furthermore, two key elements in the new-look Milan also come from players who were already on the books. Firstly, there is Kaladze, whose ability to replace Maldini at left-back has not only added extra attacking bite down the flank but has also guaranteed Maldini an Indian summer to his career in the new role of central defender.

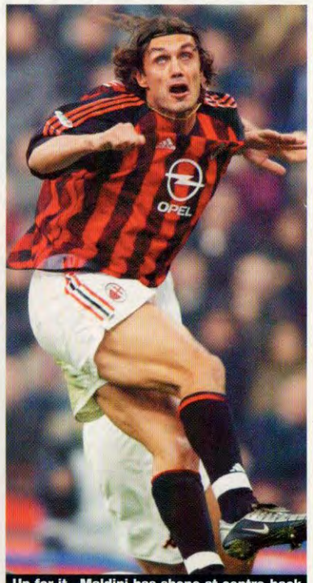
Then, too, Brazilian goalkeeper Dida took advantage of an injury to previous first choice, Christian Abbiati, to such effect that by mid-autumn he was the unchallenged man between the posts, adding an element of huge security.

As Milan head into the new year, the worrying thought for opponents at home and abroad is that players such as Shevchenko, Rivaldo and Nesta have yet to show their best form. Furthermore, Ancelotti believes he may have gained a significant addition to his already strong squad with the return from injury of Argentinian Fernando Redondo, who, more than two years after joining Milan, finally made his club debut in an Italian Cup tie against Ancona in late November.

Thus far, Milan have tended to play with a 4-3-2-1 line-up in which the key element is the fixed nature of the back four and the midfield trio, allowing such as Rivaldo, Shevchenko, Inzaghi and Rui Costa space for co-habitation up front. In other words, the ideal Milan line-up envisages Maldini and Nesta in central defence, Kaladze and either Dane Thomas Helveg or Croat Dario Simic on the flanks with Pirlo flanked by Gattuso, Ambrosini or Seedorf in midfield.

That way, Ancelotti has been able to shuffle around his player pack up front. Sometimes he has started with Shevchenko and Inzaghi backed up by either Rui Costa or Rivaldo. More often, however, he has preferred to play just one genuine striker, either Shevchenko or Inzaghi, allowing for both Rui Costa and Rivaldo to play behind him.

'Milan are producing flowing football light years away from the over-cautious, negative attitude that marked recent Italian flops'



Up for it...Maldini has shone at centre-back

Committed to the cause...Andrea Pirlo, with Alessandro Nesta in attendance, halts a Roma attack

Whichever way he calls it, Ancelotti is always likely to come up with a side capable of smooth, flowing football. That is not to say, however, that they are unbeatable, a point underlined in Turin in mid-November when reigning champions Juventus deservedly won. Indeed, the 2-1 scoreline was positively flattering to Ancelotti's men.

On that occasion, Juventus coach Marcello Lippi stymied the Milan guns by fielding an aggressive midfield that simply denied the opposition time to settle on the ball. Future opponents, at home and abroad, could well have learned something useful.

Not, mind you, that Ancelotti has been swept off his feet by the consistently rave reviews heading his way this New Year. "So far, there is no doubt it has been a positive season," he said. "However, for those of us who work in football, it's in June that you get judged, on the basis of results obtained."

From the man who got the sack at Juventus after twice finishing second in Serie A, that observation could be taken to mean something much more simple. Namely, we ain't won nothing, yet.

Shevchenko:
'Just glad to be back'

IT TOOK just one goal for Andrii Shevchenko to wipe away his demons and the doubts building up among Milan fans that their Ukrainian striker had lost his magic touch.

Pre-season injuries meant surgery and a late start to term for the former Kyiv Dynamo striker. By then, Pippo Inzaghi and new signing Rivaldo had taken over as Milan's strike partnership and fired the former European champions back to the top of Serie A.

But the pressures of high intensity competition at both home and abroad had bruised Inzaghi and Rivaldo so coach Carlo Ancelotti recalled Shevchenko to his starting line-up for the Champions League second phase opener at home to holders Real Madrid.

Shortly before half-time, playmaker Rui Costa floated a long pass over the top of the Spanish side's defence and Shevchenko accelerated through to strike the only goal of the game. The following Sunday he celebrated his 100th appearance in Serie A by scoring again to secure a 1-1 draw with Empoli.

That was a remarkable turnaround considering Shevchenko had expected to be sitting on the bench against Madrid. He says: "Since I had come back from injury I had scored two goals but I knew I hadn't been playing well. So when I not only started but scored the goal it was a great sensation. I was just glad to be in the team. My ambition for the game had been to play really well – even more than getting on the scoresheet."

His team-mates reacted with almost as much delight as the scorer – partly because they had opened the scoring against the champions of Europe and partly because they were pleased for Shevchenko, personally.

"They knew how difficult it had been for me," he says. "You wouldn't believe the number of phone calls and messages of congratulation I received from players at other clubs. Inter's Christian Vieri was one of them. He understands what I've been through. Ask any player. The entire reason for your career is to be out on the pitch. When you don't play some of the things you hear and read are incredible. Really hurtful. I get really depressed. I wouldn't wish the way I feel on any other player."

It had crossed his mind, even at that early stage in the season, to consider asking for a transfer. To Shevchenko it is a matter of logic that "if there is no place for you then it's right for you to go somewhere else. But I want the best for Milan and I have always believed that the club felt the same about me. So I thought I should wait and see what happened.

"Being out of the team came really hard to me because, all through my career, with Kyiv, with Milan and with the Ukraine national team I had always played as long as I was fit – and sometimes even when I wasn't fully fit. What's happened this season has probably helped me grow up a bit.

"I understand why rotation or turnover makes sense. The coach wants to do the best he can for the club so he picks the players he thinks are in the best form. But when you are one of the players left out logic goes out the window.

"The truth is, a big club need a lot of top players and they cannot all play at the same time. Everyone has to wait his turn. You have to tell yourself it's not your fault, it's the way the game is nowadays. My head understands rotation; my heart wants to play every game."

Shevchenko always pays the greatest compliments for personal support to his partner, Kristin. He has yet to come to terms with the media's interest in footballers' lives off the pitch. He says: "It hasn't been easy for her. I don't understand why a footballer's private life should be the subject for so much gossip or criticism. We've been together for two years. A piece of paper saying we are married wouldn't change anything so why should we bother?"

Clearly, Shevchenko might have problems adjusting to footballing life in the goldfish bowl which is the English Premiership. But when he has friends in such high places why should he leave Italy?

'Being out of the team came really hard to me because, throughout my career, I had always played as long as I was fit. What's happened this season has probably helped me grow up a bit'

Business as usual...Shevchenko eludes Borussia Dortmund's Worns

Silvio Berlusconi, Italy's Prime Minister and owner of Milan, has taken a flatteringly personal interest in Shevchenko's career, which the player reciprocates. Shevchenko says: "Personally, I have a lot of time for Berlusconi. He's been very supportive of myself and my family. He was the one, when I was out of the team, who told me to be patient and concentrate on what was good for the club.

"He was right, so when the team were winning I joined in the celebrations even though I had been sitting on the bench or in the stand. Obviously, I wasn't totally happy because I was not playing. But then the club, the coach and the fans would think it odd if I were happy to be stuck on the bench."

Another admirer of Shevchenko is Leonid Kuchma, state President of Ukraine. Kuchma's office phoned Shevchenko the morning after the Madrid match. He had flown down to Rome to see Kristin and Kuchma happened to be in the capital on an official visit to Italy. Shevchenko was invited for lunch and was so unprepared he had to go straight out and buy a suit for the occasion.

Not that Shevchenko is relying on that one goal to turn his season around. He says: "The only thing one goal changes is one game. It doesn't make any long-term difference. You celebrate at the time, then you come back down to earth and start all over again.

"I will keep doing my job and trying to score as many goals as I can – or as I am allowed to. I believe this Milan team are good enough to win Serie A for the first time since I came here, and we can also win the Champions League. I want to win the lot and I want to play a full part. Carlo Ancelotti knows that. I've told him so. He knows exactly where I stand.

"I have a lot of respect for Ancelotti. Being a coach in Serie A is a tough life. After the Real Madrid game I exchanged shirts with Raul. But then I gave the shirt to Ancelotti because he had also wanted it – and he's had his share of pressure and criticism. I thought he had earned it."

Keir Radnedge

CLUB FOCUS The squad MILAN

THE COACH

Carlo ANCELOTTI
Born: 10.05.69. Tough midfielder as a player who won the Italian title with hometown club Roma in 1983, and then a host of honours under Arrigo Sacchi and Fabio Capello at Milan. Began coaching at Reggiana in 1995-96 but made his name at Parma, taking them to second place in Serie A in 1996-97. Moved to Juventus in 1999 but struggled to be accepted because of his Milan connections. Until this season, he was seen as a strict 4-4-2 man who liked hard-working teams and was suspicious of creative players.

GOALKEEPERS

Christian ABBIATI
08.07.77. Star of the 1998-99 title-winning season but has been displaced by Dida this season.

DIDA (Bra)
10.07.73. Part of Brazil's World Cup-winning squad last year, although he did not play. Now established as Milan's No 1 after falling victim to a passport scandal two years ago and returning to Brazilian side Corinthians on loan.

Valerio FIORI
27.04.69. Experienced third-choice who spent seven seasons with Lazio in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

DEFENDERS

Jose Antonio CHAMOT (Arg)
17.05.69. Rugged, veteran Argentinian international who provides cover across the back four.

Alessandro COSTACURTA
24.04.66. Centre-back in his 16th season at San Siro enjoying an Indian summer to his career.

Thomas HELVEG (Den)
24.06.71. Experienced Danish international right-back. Can also play in midfield.

Kakha KALADZE (Geo)
27.02.78. Former Kyiv Dynamo central defender who plays at left-back for Milan. A powerful and intelligent defender, he has been one of the side's best players since joining in January 2001.

Martin LAURSEN (Den)
26.07.77. Goalscoring Danish international centre-back who joined in summer 2001 from Verona. Now second-choice behind Maldini and Nesta.

Paolo MALDINI
26.06.68. Continues to play a leading role for club despite having retired from international football after the World Cup. The son of former Italy coach Cesare, he made his Milan debut at 16. Now features at centre-back after many years as the world's best left-back.

Alessandro NESTA
19.03.76. One of the most accomplished defenders in Serie A who joined for £20million from Lazio last summer. Despite Italy's disappointing World Cup, he remains a defender with outstanding timing, positioning, touch and control.

ROQUE JUNIOR (Bra)
31.08.76. World Cup-winning centre-back signed from Palmeiras in January 2000. Occasionally error-prone but has a good touch.

Dario SIMIC (Cro)
12.11.75. Right-sided defender who joined Milan in last summer's swap deals with Inter. Plays as a man-marker for Croatia, but has been used at right-back by Ancelotti.

Outstanding...Nesta

MIDFIELDERS

Massimo AMBROSINI
29.05.77. Italian international whose hard work is appreciated by Ancelotti. Vies with Gattuso for a place in the starting line-up.

Ibrahim BA (Fra)
12.01.73. Former French international back at San Siro after spells at Perugia and Marseille. Offers trickery on the flanks; mostly used as a substitute.

Hard graft...Ambrosini

Cristian BROCCHI
30.01.76. Made his name at Verona, where his attacking instincts came to the fore, but has had few chances at Milan.

Sam DALLA BONA
06.02.81. Under-21 international signed from Chelsea for a nominal fee last summer and has provided healthy competition for the likes of Ambrosini and Gattuso.

Gennaro GATTUSO
09.01.78. Gritty little midfield battler who made his name at Rangers before returning to Italy. World Cup squad member.

LEONARDO (Bra)
09.05.69. Surprisingly returned to Milan last summer after a year back in Brazil. World Cup winner in 1994.

Andrea PIRLO
19.05.79. Key member of the side after being shifted back to a midfield anchor role. Made his name as a teenager with Brescia, winning promotion in 1997, but failed to establish himself at Inter, whom he joined the following year. Joined Milan in 2001 and has established himself in the national side this season. Excellent passing vision and set-piece skills.

Fernando REDONDO (Arg)
06.06.69. Recently returned after two years out with a serious knee injury, having not played since an £11m move from Real Madrid in summer 2000. Ancelotti described his comeback as hugely significant but doubts remain over his long-term fitness. Twice a Champions League winner with Real Madrid.

Manuel RUI COSTA (Por)
29.03.72. Gifted playmaker and one of the finest Portuguese players of his generation. A World Youth Cup winner in 1991, he joined Milan in summer 2001 for £28m after seven seasons at Fiorentina.

Clarence SEEDORF (Hol)
01.04.76. Dutch international who has spent his career (Ajax, Real Madrid, Inter) fighting a reputation for being difficult to handle. However, he has already established himself in the Milan side after last summer's move across town from Inter. Teenage Champions League winner with Ajax in 1995.

SERGINHO (Bra)
27.06.71. Lightning-fast left wing-back or midfielder used to devastating effect as a substitute, particularly in Champions League matches.

FORWARDS

Marco BORRIELLO
18.06.82. Under-21 international and viewed as one for the future. Could soon be loaned out to gain experience.

Filippo INZAGHI
09.08.73. Classic penalty-box predator not much loved by northern European commentators, but the statistics – he recently became Milan's highest goalscorer in Europe – speak for themselves.

RIVALDO (Bra)
19.04.72. Gifted left-footed playmaker who joined on a free transfer from Barcelona in one of last summer's highest-profile moves. Outstanding in Brazil's World Cup victory, he has settled quickly, playing alongside Rui Costa and behind Inzaghi. Came to Europe in 1996, joining Deportivo La Coruna, then went to Barcelona a year later.

Class...Inzaghi and Rui Costa

Andrii SHEVCHENKO (Ukr)
29.09.76. Striker who was a star of Kyiv Dynamo's run to the 1999 Champions League semi-finals. Joined Milan in summer 1999.

Jon Dahl TOMASSON (Den)
29.08.76. Danish international and one of the best second strikers in Europe. Joined Milan on a free transfer from Feyenoord after winning the UEFA Cup last May, but his influence has been marginalised by Rivaldo.

GIGGS, LAUREN, GALLAS, WADDLE, RICARDO - THE BIGGEST NAMES TALK TO
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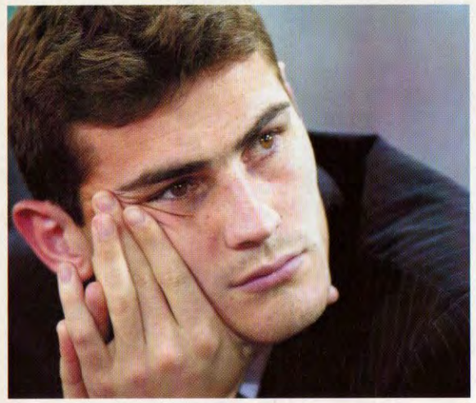
A very normal superstar

Sid Lowe talks to Real Madrid's goalkeeper about life in the fast lane

FOR all the money spent on Ronaldo, Figo and Zidane or the attention lavished upon Raul and Roberto Carlos, a sixth superstar is emerging at Real Madrid – keeper Iker Casillas. Superb in the Champions League Final, the World Cup and the World Club Cup, the 21-year-old is growing accustomed to rescuing his superstar team-mates.

Many in the Spanish media are tipping Casillas as a future European Footballer of the Year; some even demanded that he win the 2002 award. Casillas, though, is happy to "just get on with his job", leaving his more illustrious team-mates to hog the limelight.

After all, the Madrid-born shot-stopper, who has been at Real for nine years, has seen it all before. "I was made here; as a player and a person," he says. "No one can tell me anything about this club that I don't already know."



● 'Real's system is perfect. With our players it's difficult to find the right formation, but that's what the manager has done'

WORLD SOCCER: No matter how well you play, the media still focuses more on the big stars – like Zidane, Ronaldo and Figo. Doesn't that annoy you?
IKER CASILLAS: No, I prefer it. If they get all the attention, so much the better; I can just get on with it, without the pressure. I'm better off in the shadows.

This team is made to attack. You must be crying out for some decent protection.
No, because that's the way it has always, always been. Any goalkeeper that's ever played here will say the same. Madrid attack, full stop.

You certainly have to make a lot of saves. At least you don't get bored during matches.
I can assure you that I'm not unemployed out there!

Is it better that way? Would it be harder to keep your concentration if you didn't see the ball so often?
Maybe. But it's more about what you're used to. I've been here since I was a kid and I know what it means to play for Real Madrid; that sometimes you'll let in an important goal and people will blame you. But you get used to that.

At least your team-mates are likely to bail you out if you do make a mistake.
Of course. If I make a mistake and Ronaldo scores a hat-trick, no worries.

That said, didn't Madrid need a defender rather than Ronaldo? Shouldn't they buy a centre-back?
That's someone else's job. So long as they don't buy any keepers, that's fine. But I would like our signings to be Spaniards.

What about the system at Real? Some say there isn't one.
The system is perfect. With our players it's difficult to find the right formation, but that's what the manager has done. When Zidane arrived, we left the whole of the left wing to Roberto Carlos so Zizou could have a free role. It took us a while to adapt, partly because it was tough for Zizou to settle, but it worked. The aim is always to fit the best players in.

Your coach, Vicente Del Bosque, seems such a normal person for a club crammed with superstars.
Yes, he's very relaxed, very quiet. He knows how to deal with people. He never – well, almost never – shouts or has a go at anyone. He analyses things carefully and does everything with patience.

And what's it like in the dressing-room? There seem to be distinct little groups; Ronaldo's always with Flavio Conceicao, for example...
That's logical – linguistically as much as anything else. If I went to play in Russia and there was a Spanish guy in the team I'd end up being friends with him.

So, who's your best friend here?
The lads from the youth team, but I get on well with Zizou and Roberto...

You were a key player in the World Club Cup; your saves were just as vital as Ronaldo's goal.
That's my mission: be there and stop everything I can.

You're making a habit of rescuing your team-mates. So much so that the press has started talking about you winning the *Ballon d'Or*. Some said you should have won it last year.
Nah, I'll stick with the under-23 award, the *Trofeo Bravo*, thanks.

You won't be saying that if you win the *Ballon d'Or*.
Ha, ha! No, true. But I'm a realist. Just as Roberto Carlos and Ronaldo battled for the *Ballon d'Or*, I could be in the running for the *Trofeo Bravo* because that's the point I'm at; I'm 21 years old. If I did win it, it would be my second, the same as Ronaldo – and look where he is now. So that's in my thoughts, not the *Ballon d'Or*.

Your performances in Glasgow and Korea were what most caught the eye. And yet you very nearly didn't play in either the Champions League Final or the World Cup.
True, I was a sub for both.

Then both Cesar and Canizares got injuries which gave you the chance. You must have a lucky charm somewhere.
Maybe. But I look at it from the other side. If I'd come on in the Final and not stopped anything, what would be the point? If you go to the World Cup and lose with four shocking errors, then what?

Talking about the World Cup, how do you look back on that? It looked like Spain were on the verge of a breakthrough, but then you fell at the normal hurdle.
But we fell for a reason – the referee. We were destined to lose; no matter what we did we couldn't win. Everyone saw that it was a complete robbery. I'm convinced that if we'd won against Korea we would have got through the semis and I'm sure that we would have won the World Cup.

But you would have had to play Brazil.
I didn't like Brazil at all. I didn't see a team there. I think they won the Final because Germany played with so much fear.

And without Ballack.
I don't know how much difference that made. People are talking about him a lot this year and saying he should have won the *Ballon d'Or*, but I think there are players who have done more than him over a period of time, like Raul.

You were the star in the penalty shoot-out against the Republic of Ireland. What's the secret?
There isn't one. It's luck.

But when your opponent is getting ready to take the penalty, what are you thinking?
What kind of player he is, if he's quick, if he hits the ball hard or places it, if he's got a lot of technical ability. That's all. If he hits it well, you haven't got a hope.

Back in Spain the press went crazy. You were Saint Iker, the Messiah, God, even. How do you react to that?
To be honest, I didn't really know out in Korea. You don't see the papers or appreciate the size of the reaction back home.

Believe me, it was insane. With so much media attention, such eulogy, is it difficult to remain 'normal'?
Everyone deals with the pressure differently, but for me it's not a problem. I can go to the cinema with my mates, or go out on the *botellon* if I feel like it. [The *botellon* is the Spanish habit of buying cheap alcohol and sitting on the streets or in parks getting drunk with your friends – a favourite pastime of teenagers all over the country.]

Seriously? You go out on the *botellon*?
Er, well, what I mean is that the attention doesn't make any difference. I'm the same as I always was, I don't let it change what I do and I've still got the same mates, most of whom aren't footballers. I'm quite normal, really.

Getting an edge...Pablo Aimar's increasingly confident displays were a key factor in Valencia's title run-in

Mestalla maestro

The Valencia coach talks to Simon Baskett about achieving success against the odds

THE ODDS were stacked against Rafael Benitez when he was appointed as Valencia coach at the start of last season. Yet in the space of a little over 12 months the 42-year-old former Real Madrid reserve team boss has silenced the critics by steering the club to their first Spanish League title in 31 years and overseeing an impressive start to his second season at the helm.

Benitez was not exactly the big-name appointment many of the Valencia fans had hoped would replace Internazionale-bound Hector Cuper. In fact, it was only after rejections from Javier Irureta, Luis Aragones and Jose Manuel Esnal, that Benitez was even offered the job. He may have guided modest Tenerife to promotion from the Second Division the season before, but many doubted he had the experience and talent to take control at a top First Division side.

The backdrop to his arrival at Mestalla was, therefore, none too inviting. Successive defeats in the Final of the Champions League had left their mark on the club and helped persuade their most influential player, Gaizka Mendieta, that it was time to move on. Even the man who appointed Benitez, club president Pedro Cortes, decided it was time to call it a day after admitting that the incessant in-fighting at board level was taking its toll on his health.

But Benitez, who began his coaching career in the Real Madrid youth section after being forced into premature retirement by knee problems, was not ready to let these early setbacks undermine his determination to make a name for himself. "It was difficult at the start because some people didn't appreciate that I had actually done a lot of good work in getting a team like Tenerife promoted,"

●'You can't have a record of winning big titles unless you already coach a big club, and it took people some time to understand that'

says Benitez. "You can't have a record of winning big titles unless you already coach a big club, and it took people some time to understand that."

The quietly confident young coach, who lists Johan Cruyff and Arrigo Sacchi among his influences, got off to a perfect start when his side carved out a 1-0 win over Real Madrid in the opening match of the season at Mestalla. That victory gave him enough credit to survive an otherwise mediocre start to the League campaign.

But Benitez was in for a rough ride during his first few months in charge. In October 2001 he had to take the blame for the team's first-round exit from the Copa del Rey. A last-minute tactical substitution meant Valencia exceeded the limit for the number of non-European Union players on the pitch and were thrown out of the competition.

Soon after he faced a challenge to his authority when both reserve keeper Anders Palop and disgruntled Argentinian winger Kily Gonzalez criticised their new coach. Benitez, however, refused to wilt under the pressure and in a show of strength dropped both men from the squad.

"When you start out in a new job you always have to assert yourself," he explains. "You are almost always going to face criticism, so you need to make sure everyone knows their place and then you can lay down the rules. Little by little the players recognise what they are doing is worthwhile, and that is when you gain in authority as a coach."

A subsequent dip in form saw Benitez's men go five matches without a win and by the time they visited Espanyol in mid-December the fans were on his back and his job was clearly in jeopardy. Valencia trailed 2-0 at half-time and by all accounts the board were already composing a dismissal notice when they hit back with three goals in seven second-half minutes to scrape a vital 3-2 win.

Benitez remains philosophical about the pressures he was subjected to at that time. "Valencia are a very demanding club," he says. "If things are going well the fans are very happy, but if not then they soon let you know and start questioning what you are doing. But as a coach you have to learn to adapt to that sort of pressure at a club like this."

The Espanyol match was the turning point in the season and from then on Benitez saw his side edge up the standings until by the beginning of February they were top of the table. In the run-in to the end of the season Valencia kept their cool while title rivals Real Madrid and Deportivo La Coruna faltered. The return from injury of midfielder Ruben Baraja and the increasingly confident displays of Argentinian playmaker Pablo Aimar started to give them the edge and they wrapped up their first title in 31 years with a 2-0 win at Malaga in the penultimate game of the season.

It says much for Benitez's skills as a coach that he was able to bring an air of calm confidence to a club badly scarred by their recent disappointments in the Champions League.

"There was a psychological problem," he says, "a sense of anxiety that it was high time the club won another important title. But in the end we were able to control and overcome that and use it to our advantage."

By the end of the season he had both players and fans behind him and it was the commitment from these two groups that Benitez signals as playing a vital part in their run to the title.

"For me the key was that we had a high-class and very competitive squad," he says. "We had a group of players that were very focused on their work and aware that whoever played had to give 100 per cent. In the final stages of the season the support of the fans helped us a great deal because they played a big part in helping us win those vital matches at the end."

This season Valencia have picked up where they left off and are already riding high in La Liga, while they have been one of the outstanding sides in the early stages of the Champions League. A classy 2-0 win over Liverpool at Mestalla and a 6-2 demolition of Basle helped them cruise to qualification for the second group phase.

Although the Valencia fans would now dearly love to lay to rest the ghosts of their defeats in two successive Champions League Finals with victory this season, Benitez insists that he is looking no further than the remainder of the second phase.

"We have drawn some very tough opponents [Roma, Arsenal and Ajax] so we have to concentrate on dealing with them, and if we make it through to the quarter-finals we can start setting new objectives. At the moment our priorities lie with both the Spanish League and Europe. What we will try to do is focus on whatever games we have to play each week and not get carried away looking any further down the road to potential titles."

Ajax coach Ronald Koeman commented recently that Valencia were now a stronger outfit than either the reigning European champions Real Madrid or Louis Van Gaal's Barcelona. To some extent, Benitez agrees. "I think what Koeman meant is that we are a more balanced team in terms of attack and defence than either Real or Barça," he says.

"If you looked at it player for player there would be plenty of room for argument about our respective strengths, but what I can be sure about is that the footballers at Valencia work well together as a team. We may not have as many stars as Real, but we do have a strong unit and we are very happy with the group of players at our disposal. My job is to make sure we get the best out of each and every one of them."

Fact file

Born April 16, 1960, in Madrid
Previous clubs (as a coach) Real Madrid B, Valladolid, Osasuna, Extremadura, Tenerife

Luiz Felipe SCOLARI

Portugal calling

A new challenge for Brazil's World Cup-winning coach

LUIZ Felipe Scolari is confident he can inject his particular brand of steel into notoriously fragile Portugal's bid to win 'their' European Championship in 18 months' time.

'Felipao', who rescued Brazil from a chaotic World Cup qualifying campaign and turned them into world champions for a record fifth time, flew in to Lisbon to sign his contract on the way to managing the World XI at the Real Madrid centenary just before Christmas. He also took time out to explain both why he quit Brazil and why he turned down more lucrative offers for the chance of working in Europe for the first time.

Scolari, 54, succeeds caretaker boss Agostinho Oliveira on a contract worth around £100,000 a month. This was more than the Portuguese federation wanted to pay but reports from Brazil suggest that sponsor Nike is helping make up the difference.

But the money was not the only issue on Scolari's mind, and he was never tempted to stay on with Brazil. "Whatever the result at the World Cup I would have felt I had achieved my mission and should look for a new challenge," he said. "The only thing was, I did not want to jump straight into something new. I wanted to take a rest so that I could make a sensible, long-term decision about my future. That is what I have done, that's what the Portugal job is for me.

"You see, I have won the Gulf Cup in Asia [with Kuwait], the South American Club Cup [with Cruzeiro] and the World Cup. The only major football world in which I have yet to make a mark is Europe. That was an important factor in my decision because I had a lot of offers from clubs in South America and Europe and to manage national teams outside Brazil. For example, Mexico had a very well-organised project which I went to see."

● 'I don't have a magic wand. I can help them, but, in the end, it's the players who must put in the work'

Initially, Scolari had been tempted to stay in Brazil, back in club football, but "then the Portuguese federation came along – and here I am. If it had been about money I could have taken up one of several other offers which paid better. But I want to do something in Europe and I think Portugal, as Euro 2004 hosts, have an excellent chance. So I'll be here until then at least."

Brazilian coaches have a poor record in European football. The clash of footballing cultures has usually been too jarring. But Scolari considers this one of the most appealing challenges and privately thinks he can set a trend. "The more of us who come to work here," he says, "the more coaches back home will want to take the plunge. A Brazilian coach can bring some of the technical training we do in South America with the ball. He will also have the chance to learn and adjust to European standards of organisation. Everyone can benefit."

He has certainly not wasted time, having talked informally with some of the Portuguese players at their clubs even before the formal signing of his contract. He said: "I was assured I would have total support – from the players and the clubs. You have to have the domestic game behind you to achieve anything.

"I think the players are all ambitious to be winners. That is the spirit which the Portuguese team lacked at the World Cup and for too many years before that as well. The players all recognise that something has been missing; perhaps it was discipline or organisation. Sorting that out is my job within the Euro 2004 project. I think 18 months is not a lot of time but it's enough to build something positive, get the players to understand that I have come in to help them.

"I don't have a magic wand. I can help them, but, in the end, they are the ones who must put in the work."

Scolari thinks England, assuming they qualify, could emerge as one of the favourites to win Euro 2004. Sven Goran Eriksson's men may have faded badly in the World Cup quarter-final against Brazil, but Scolari does not believe that performance represented the true value of England's potential. He said: "Belgium, whom we beat in the second round, were our most difficult opponents at the World Cup, but England have a lot of quality players and an outstanding coach. I think we just had more problems with Belgium because they were less of a known quantity and we were afraid they would surprise us."

Scolari's Brazil job ended, of course, in a defeat against Paraguay in what was supposed to be a 'celebration' match, but he has not let that result upset his self-confidence. "Losing was appropriate in a perverse sort of way," he said. "We began my time with a defeat against Uruguay and we ended with defeat to Paraguay. But what will be remembered is what happened in between – winning the World Cup. That was what was really important, not losing afterwards to Paraguay. Anyway, that game was a big party for us. We wanted to give everyone the chance to play. You cannot expect too much from a team that uses 20 players in one game – even a Brazilian team."

The question now, of course, is how much the European game can expect of Scolari's 'new' Portugal?

Keir Radnedge

LUCIANO/ERIBERTO

Playing the name game

Chievo's controversial Brazilian is back in business after his identity crisis

THE Italian federation served up the ideal Christmas present for the player who fooled not only their football but also the country's immigration controls for four years when Luciano Siqueira de Oliveira was cleared to resume his career three months ahead of schedule.

The problem was that when Luciano joined Bologna in summer 1998 no one in Italy knew him by that name. Bologna thought, instead, that they had bought Eriberto Conceicao da Silva, who had an Italian family background which would help Bologna evade restrictions on non-European Union players. Moreover, the passport of 'Eriberto' set his date of birth as January 21, 1979. Thus he claimed to be a promising 19-year-old. In fact, the real Luciano had been born on December 3, 1976.

The Brazilian's true identity came to light after the launch of a legal investigation into a string of allegations about false passports more than 18 months ago. By now he was a star with surprise Serie A club Chievo. No matter. Last October he was banned for seven months, meaning he could not play until April this year.

Luciano's lawyers appealed, and the appeal committee of the Italian Olympic Committee – which governs all Italian sport – decided just before Christmas to commute the ban and let Luciano return to action in late January.

He says: "Life has been tough for me. I come from a poor home in Brazil – and you have no idea, in Europe, what that means. When I was seven my mother died of cancer. Again, in Europe, she might have had treatment to save her. In Brazil that wasn't possible. When I was 13 my father died from a heart attack."

Luciano began playing football in the streets, then joined a small club in Rio de Janeiro, called Boa Esperanza from a suburb called Rio Bonito. "I was desperate to do well at football because I wanted to help my family and I wanted to escape from that life," he says. "I joined Palmeiras, who are one of the biggest Brazilian clubs, and I was in their first-team squad when I was about 20. But it wasn't well paid.

"There's no money in Brazilian football or South American football in general. Why do you think all the players are so desperate to come to Europe? It's the big dream. You think you can go to Europe, make a fortune and make life better for all your family."

It was at Palmeiras that Luciano was approached by an agent, whom he has refused to name, who suggested he could sort out a transfer for the player to Italy. But there was bad news in store: he was told that he was too old. "I needed to be younger and have some sort of family history connected with Italy," says Luciano. "So the agent found a young reserve player, Eriberto, who had all that and had no objections – and I took his identity. I didn't worry about the paperwork. I left that to other people. I wanted to do the best for my brothers and sisters and cousins and it wasn't harming anyone. What was important was how well I played. After all, if I didn't play well then I wouldn't get a club or keep a club. It's not the name on your passport that goes out on the pitch."

Luciano signed for Bologna in 1998 and had two seasons there. The excitement and realisation of the dream outweighed the con trick. But Luciano was in and out of the team and, after two years, was sold to Chievo, then virtually unknown in Serie B.

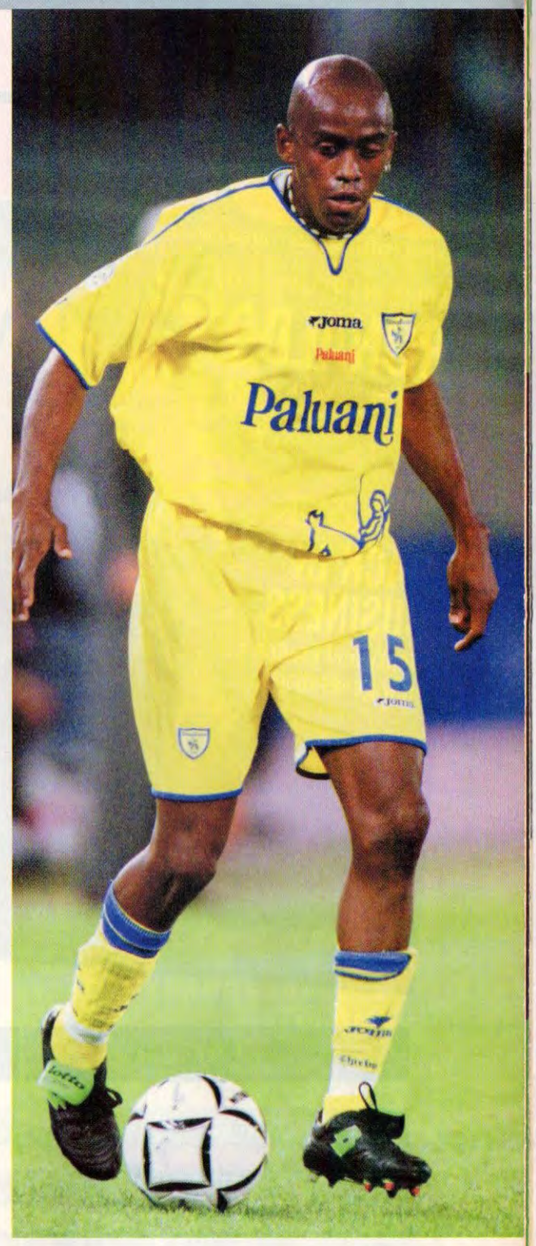
● 'I didn't worry about the paperwork. I wasn't harming anyone. What was important was how well I played'

"I'd never heard of them," says Luciano, "but the money was good, compared with Brazil. I was Eriberto to Bologna, so I signed as Eriberto for Chievo and no one was any the wiser. I had a sensational time – I played almost every game and we got promoted. It was the first time Chievo had ever been in Serie A and the fans went mad.

"Life couldn't have been better. I was the first boy from Rio Bonito to make good in football and I had loads of friends here in Italy. To be honest, it didn't really cross my mind any more that I was living a lie. Then, of course, one day it all came out in the newspapers. I read them and got this sinking feeling.

"Journalists started calling me and asking whether it was true. What could I say? There was nothing I could do but own up and take whatever punishment was coming. So I was suspended and lost the chance of a big-money transfer to Lazio."

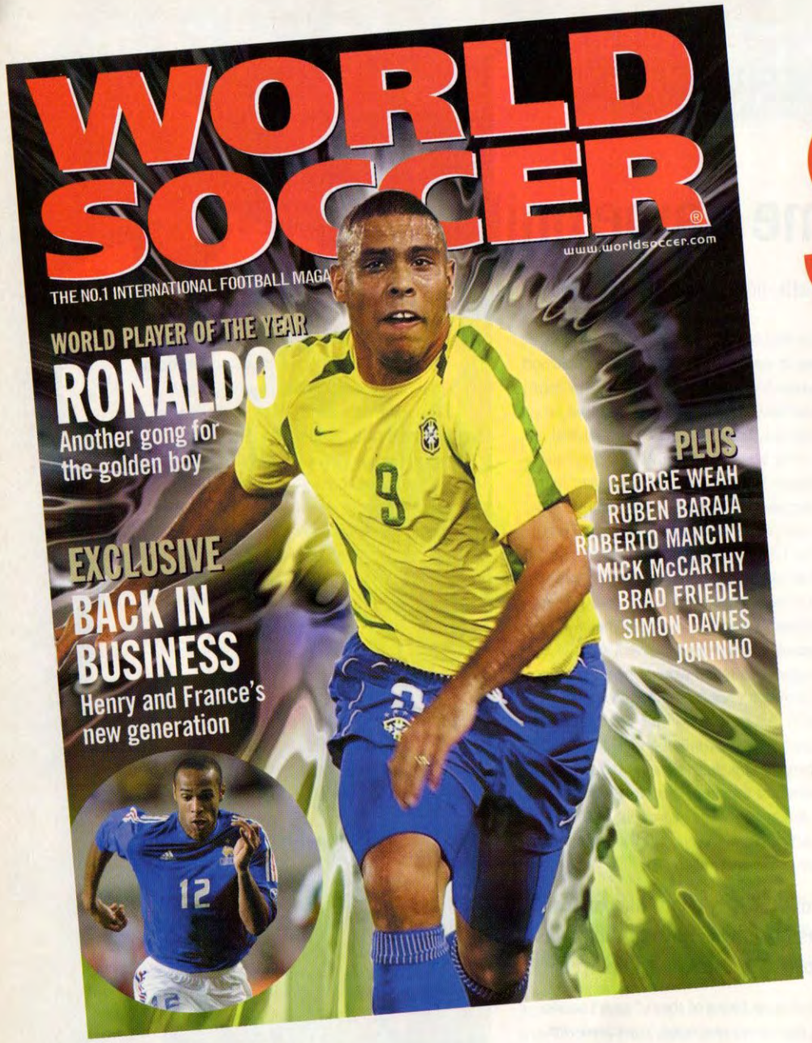
Chievo stuck by Luciano. For one thing, being cynical, they remain confident of being able to cash in financially on his talent. Whatever the reasoning, Luciano was both relieved and grateful. But enduring the suspension was not easy.



He says: "On weekdays I have felt like any other player – going out on to the pitch, enjoying myself, scoring goals in training games. But the Saturdays have been almost worse than the Sundays, seeing my team-mates with their overnight bags going off together to the team hotel the night before a game.

"I used to go home and cry, really. Now it's all changing again. My fiancee and I got married at Christmas and we have our son, Gabriel, to put a smile back on my face. Also, in football terms, I have had my ideal Christmas present. At last the weight is off my back."

Keir Radnedge



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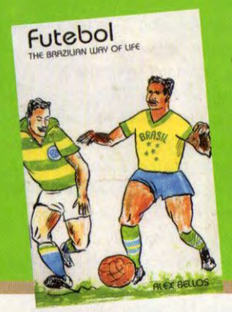

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In his stride...Robinho shows his trickery during the championship Final against Corinthians

Young guns, old traditions

Brian Homewood profiles the team who revived memories of Pele's 1960s side by winning the 2002 Brazilian championship

TWO years ago, Santos were thrashed 5-0 by arch-rivals Corinthians in a Sao Paulo derby. The team's supporters, already frustrated at their once-great club's inability to win a major domestic competition, turned their banners upside down in protest. They then announced that they would only put the banners back the right way up again when the title drought ended.

Shortly before 7pm on December 15, 2002, at the Morumbi stadium in Sao Paulo, they began putting the banners back the right way up. Santos had just scored their third goal in the second leg of the Brazilian championship Final against Corinthians to go 3-2 ahead on the day and 5-2 up on aggregate.

The long wait, which had gone back to the Paulista championship in 1984, was finally over. Better still, it had been achieved with an uninhibited, flowing style that brought back memories of the great days of the 1960s when the Pele-inspired team won the World Club Cup twice in a row. Most remarkable of all, the new title-winning team had an average age of less than 23 and were led by a coach who only 18 months before had been unceremoniously sacked by Brazil.

A few days before the Final, Globo television had shown footage of the Santos team on their flight home after the semi-final against Gremio. The atmosphere was similar to a bunch of excited kids on a school outing and showed the frightening youth of most of the players. Captain Paulo Almeida, who patrols midfield with a Dunga-style sneer, came across as a fresh-faced teenager. And Robinho, who terrorised defences with his cheeky dribbling, was so young he looked as if he should be tucked up in bed by quarter to 10 – the time most Brazilian midweek matches kick off.

The story of the Santos revival goes back to a grey day last July, when Brazilians were still celebrating their World Cup win and the pending domestic championship had an anti-climactic feel to it.

Emerson Leao, fired by Brazil following their dismal display at the Confederations Cup in 2001, had taken over as coach. As Leao arrived at the club for his first training session, he was confronted by what appeared to be a motley mixture of teenagers fresh from the club's youth divisions and other clubs in the state of Sao Paulo.

There was an air of apprehension among the players. Although the start of the championship was only 10 days away, most expected it would be the usual story of playing for the first few games until the reinforcements arrived (Brazilian clubs tend to build their teams *after* the championship has started rather than before) and then going back to the reserves.

Yet Leao amazed them all. He told them that he had turned down the directors' offers of reinforcements and decided to work with what he had. "When I was a player, I knew how important it was to have the confidence of the coach," Leao told the *Folha de Sao Paulo* newspaper.

Asked about the players' reaction, he said: "Happiness, surprise, pride and a sense of responsibility."

It was a huge gamble. Leao's starting line-up included players who had wandered nomad-like between little-known clubs in the interior of Sao Paulo state for most of their careers: goalkeeper Julio Sergio, right-back Maurinho, left-back Leo, midfielder Renato and striker Alberto. Others, such as Paulo Almeida, Diego, Robinho and Andre Luis, were barely out of the youth team.

"Everyone expected reinforcements. I didn't know that I was going to play regularly in the championship. It was great," said Diego, the 17-year-old midfielder who, alongside Robinho, became the team's hottest property.

'Everyone expected reinforcements. I didn't know that I was going to play regularly. It was great'
17-year-old Diego

The players might have been delighted but critics did not share their early enthusiasm. The sports newspaper *Lance* predicted a hard slog. "The team is modest, with lots of unknown faces," it said. "The new signings don't give much room for optimism," it added, naming Alberto as one of the players who Santos fans should not get too excited about. Alberto ended as the team's top scorer with 12 goals, including a brilliant bicycle-kick effort in a first stage match against Corinthians.

Leao himself was very much on probation after recent experiences. The former international keeper had been dumped by his country following an unhappy eight months as coach which culminated in a 1-0 defeat by Australia at the Confederations Cup. His return to club coaching shortly afterwards was an undistinguished stint with Juventude, who only narrowly avoided relegation.

More famous for his endless touchline ranting than in developing young talent, Leao had been in charge of an unsavoury Santos team in 1998 which had definitely not lived up to the club's great traditions. Although they reached the semi-finals of the Brazilian championship and won the ▶

The squad

THE COACH

EMERSON LEAO
Born 11.07.49. Brazil's keeper at the 1974 and 1978 World Cups, he was also in the squad at the 1970 and 1982 tournaments but did not play. He had an eight-month stint in charge of Brazil during their disastrous run in the 2002 World Cup qualifiers, when he kicked out the Europe-based players and experimented with domestic ones. Fired after the Confederations Cup in June 2001. He has coached Santos once previously as well as Sport Recife, Sao Jose, Palmeiras, Portuguesa, Coritiba, Juventude, Atletico Paranaense and Atletico Mineiro plus Japan's Shimizu S-Pulse and Verdy Kawasaki. Has an explosive temper.

Saviour...Fabio Costa

GOALKEEPERS

FABIO COSTA
27.11.77. Burly goalkeeper capable of stunning reflex saves but who has an explosive temperament. Missed most of the championship with a knee injury but was forced to speed his return when replacement Julio Sergio was injured. Settled in surprisingly quickly and was one of the heroes in the second leg of the Final, making at least half a dozen high-class saves.

JULIO SERGIO Bertagnolli
08.11.78. Young goalkeeper at his sixth club in the past three years after a series of short stints with minor Sao Paulo state teams. He was enjoying an excellent tournament until being forced out through injury late in the qualifying stage.

DEFENDERS

ALEX
Aged 20. Raised at the club, the pillar of the defence in the championship and described by Leao as "the best central defender in the world". Picked up only one yellow card in the whole first phase.

ANDRE LUIS Garcia
31.07.79. Raised at Santos, he turned professional two years ago but was loaned out to Fluminense in 2001. A solid, powerful and reliable defender; one of the team's outstanding revelations.

LEO Lourenco Bastos
06.07.75. A naturally right-footed left-back, though useful with both feet, and a late developer, having made his mark only at the age of 27. Scored the last goal in the Final. His only other experience at a big club was a miserable spell at Palmeiras, when he was signed without the approval of then coach Luiz Felipe Scolari, who shunted him into the reserves. "Incredible things happened but I don't hold a grudge against Felipao," he said. Was given his only international outings by Leao at the 2001 Confederations Cup.

Mauro Sergio Viriato Mendes, MAURINHO
11.10.78. Much-travelled right-back who has had short stints with seven different teams since 1997. Joined Santos, his first major club, earlier this year and celebrated by winning the Brazilian championship at the first go. Likes to get forward and help the attack.

MICHEL dos Reis Santana
18.11.77. Reserve right-back. Raised at the club, he returned to action during the championship after completing a six-month ban after testing positive for marijuana.

Marco Antonio Costa, PRETO
18.02.80. Raised at Sao Paulo club Juventus, he joined Santos in 2000 and is a relative veteran, having played in the previous two Brazilian championships. He was the victim of the latest edition's nastiest moment, when a policeman whacked him on the head with a truncheon during a brawl in the match at Paysandu. Preto was briefly knocked unconscious but escaped without serious injury.

MIDFIELDERS

ALEXANDRE de Oliveira da Silva
13.05.74. Reserve player. Another who has wandered from club to club. Since 1995, his travels have taken him to Palmeiras, Bragantino, Lousano Paulista, Atletico Paranaense, Botafogo-Ribeirao Preto, Figueirense, America-Belo Horizonte, back to Botafogo-Ribeirao Preto and finally Santos.

DIEGO Ribas da Cunha
28.02.85. Only 17, he made his professional debut last year and quickly made an impact, winning the number 10 shirt that once belonged to Pele. Has cheeky skills and vision way beyond his years. Also has an irreverent side which has got him into trouble already. He caused a controversy during a game against Sao Paulo by dancing on the rival club's emblem after scoring a goal, and was accused of racism – which he denied – by Corinthians players after the first leg of the Final. Also got sent off against Paysandu for retaliation.

ELANO Blumer
14.06.81. Lanky, gifted midfielder with a good goalscoring record, this was his second Brazilian championship. Raised at Guarani, he joined Santos in 2001 from Internacional Limeira, a provincial club in Sao Paulo state.

PAULO ALMEIDA Santos
20.04.81. A home-bred player, he was brought into the side in 2001 and quickly made his mark with his leadership qualities. Despite being

Young visionary...Diego

only 21, he was given the captaincy by Leao. Does the midfield dirty work but manages to perform the role without resorting to violence.

RENATO Dirnei Florencia
15.05.79. To call him 'consistent' might be an understatement. He played in all 31 of Santos's championship games, did not get booked and hardly gave away the ball. Although theoretically a defensive midfielder, his excellent anticipation and timing in the tackle are complemented by good vision and accurate passing when in possession. Raised at Guarani and joined Santos two years ago, this was his fifth Brazilian championship but the first in which he made an impact.

ROBERT da Silva Almeida
03.04.71. The only over-30 to be picked by Leao, who grudgingly accepted him into the squad after he returned from a loan spell with Sao Caetano. Left-footed player with a powerful shot, his career has had highs and lows. He was in the Santos side beaten in the Final of the 1995 championship and was also on the losing side with Atletico Mineiro four years later. His unlucky streak continued with Sao Caetano when they lost the Libertadores Cup Final against Olimpia last year. Previous clubs also include Fluminense, Olaria, Bragantino, Guarani and Gremio.

FORWARDS

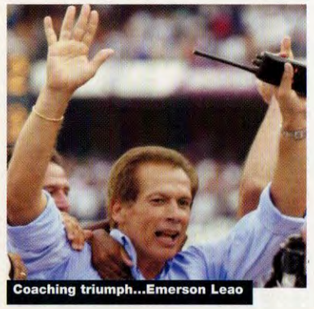
ALBERTO Luiz de Souza
27.04.75. Santos's top scorer in the competition with 12 goals, his only other time with a major club was an unsuccessful spell with Palmeiras two years ago. The season before last he played for relegated Botafogo-Ribeirao Preto and the year before was a reserve with Palmeiras, making only nine appearances.

Robson de Souza, ROBINHO
25.01.84. The new Pele. Or the new Garrincha. Brazilians seem to be divided over which he resembles most but all agree he is one of the most exciting players the country has produced for years. His irreverent dribbling style has also been compared to Denilson and he seems to take pleasure in making defenders look silly. His weakness is his finishing and he often fails when he seems to have done the difficult part. Raised at the club, this was his first season as a professional.

WILLIAM Junior Salles de Lima
14.05.83. Reserve striker raised at the club. Scored three goals in the championship.

Great-in-waiting...Robinho

SANTOS


Coaching triumph...Emerson Leao

obscure and now extinct CONMEBOL Cup, Santos's methods were highly questionable. One match was held up for nearly 20 minutes as their players brawled with radio reporters behind a goal. And at half-time during the first leg of the CONMEBOL Final against Rosario Central, furious Santos officials banged on the door of the referee, threatening the officials.

The club's finer traditions, of course, are very much rooted in the Pele-based team of the early 1960s. During the King's 17 years at the club, Santos won the Libertadores Cup twice, the World Club Cup twice and the Paulista championship 11 times. The Brazilian championship did not exist then but they also won its nearest equivalent, the *Taca Brasil*, five times.

Before Pele, Santos had been a modest team based in the port of the same name, poor relations of the big-city clubs based in Sao Paulo, 70 kilometres away on the other side of the forbidding, jungle-clad mountains that rise up from that part of the coastline.

And once Pele left in 1973 to join New York Cosmos, Santos returned to their previous existence, mustering only two Paulista championships in 18 years.

The 2001 season was one of the low points. Santos, with a team of big-name signings who never lived up to their reputations, struggled against relegation and only made headlines when their supporters invaded the 'King Pele Training Centre', interrupting a practice session, letting off fireworks and threatening and insulting the players.

There was a change of direction last year as the club decided to rely on home-bred players. Diego, who wears the number 10 shirt that once belonged to you-know-who, and Robinho, the dribbling specialist, were picked as the highlights of the team. Both were in their first professional season.

Both had excellent if rather inconsistent tournaments, but it was Robinho who received all the plaudits at the end thanks to his performance in the second leg of the Final, when he scored one goal and created the other two. Diego, rather unfortunately, hobbled off after pulling a thigh muscle only 20 seconds into the game.

First, Robinho won the penalty which he himself converted after tricking and provoking his marker Rogerio into fouling him. Then, after Corinthians had produced a sensational comeback to go 2-1 ahead, he burst down the right and laid the ball on a plate for Elano to equalise. Not content with that, he outwitted two markers to set up the final goal for Leo in injury time.

The term 'the next Pele' has become something of a throwaway term used to describe talented young Brazilians, but perhaps Robinho has better credentials than most for the title. Firstly, he plays for Pele's former club. And secondly, he shares the same apparently fragile frame that Pele possessed at a similar age.

But Robinho did not win the championship alone. Keeper Fabio Costa, who missed most of the qualifying stage through injury, defied Corinthians in the Final with half a dozen magnificent saves. Renato was outstanding in midfield, playing in all 31 championship games without picking up a yellow card. Paulo Almeida performed the midfield hard-man role without resorting to the dirty tactics favoured by many of his contemporaries in Brazil.

'If you want to make a list of the best 10 central defenders in the world, you can start with Alex'

Emerson Leao

Another revelation was left-back Leo, who finally made an impact at the age of 27 and capped his championship by rounding off the scoring in the Final. An ecstatic Leao described Leo as "better than Roberto Carlos".

The coach was equally upbeat about central defender Alex, a 20-year-old who he said was the best in the world. "If you want to make a list of the best 10 central defenders in the world, you can start with Alex," he said.

You cannot blame Leao for being a happy man. He had been grubbily treated by the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) and its president, Ricardo Teixeira, who had told him to take an experimental side to the Confederations Cup in Japan and South Korea, then fired him for his below-strength team's poor performances. But the real low point was the manner of his dismissal – at Tokyo airport as the team waited to board the plane for the 24-hour journey back home.

Asked if he wanted to coach Brazil again, Leao replied: "Not with him [Teixeira]."

He added: "This is the greatest conquest of my life after being kicked out of the Brazil team through the back door. That's not my way of leaving. I always leave through the front door with my head held high.

"It got on my nerves to walk into Vila Belmiro [Santos's stadium] and see those banners upside down. As from today, they are the right way up. And that makes me very happy."

Good old days...Santos, inspired by Pele, were all-conquering during the 1960s

He is not worthy...Ronaldo

Ronaldo row rumbles on

Leave it to the readers to declare Ronaldo World Player of the Year. Or so I thought until feeble minds around the globe named the man European Player of the Year as well as the ultimate insult: FIFA World Player of the Year.

Are we living in a world full of stupidity, or is there still hope for us all?

Let's take a quick year in review. Before May 31, Ronaldo has a very mediocre partial season for Inter. May 31-June 30, Ronaldo is God, Pele and the living Cure for Cancer all rolled into one. July 1-present, what in the name of all that is holy and true has he done? He spits in the face of Inter, transfers to Real, where he sits injured…and sits…and sits…comes in and scores twice…then sits some more.

Thierry Henry of Arsenal was by far the world's best striker of 2002 and Zidane was the single most influential player in the world. Some people will name Roberto Carlos, but his lack of defensive skill and his inconsistent free-kicks won't sway me.

Next, we'll be saying Maradona was really the greatest ever. (Oops, I think FIFA already did that.)

Heck, what do I know? I'm an American. We play soccer and football.

Mike Rice, Sunnyvale, California

Is Ronaldo the best player in the world? I honestly don't think so, at least not this year. He certainly had a great World Cup. For seven games he was wonderful. But where was he at the beginning of 2002? Except for the odd few appearances and the odd few goals, he has not made a mark in La Liga.

As far as the other two candidates for FIFA's award, Ollie Kahn also had a great seven games at the World Cup. But what about the rest of 2002? Not much had been heard of him (except for the odd tussle with team-mates and opponents). Zidane had a great year with Real, where he won much silverware. But was he the best? Out of these three he was the best. But how about the rest of the world?

My top three look this way, in order: 3 Zidane, 2 Ballack, 1 Roberto Carlos.

Alas, Roberto Carlos won't get any awards due to the fact that he is a defensive player. It's a shame, too, because he had an outstanding year.

Nate, Michigan, USA

Gavin Hamilton replies: This debate is never going to be resolved! In a World Cup year, the winner of the various end-of-year awards is always going to be the star of that summer's tournament, and in 2002 that was – without a shadow of a doubt – Ronaldo.

Consistency through the 12 months of the year is never properly rewarded. If it was, Raul would have beaten many of his Real Madrid team-mates in recent years.

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ACROSS

7 Nigerian forward transferred last year from Al Saad to Lens (5)
8 Young Waterford-born defender of Man Utd and Ireland (5)
9 *World Soccer's* World Player of the Year 2002 (7)
10 Chunnam Dragons full-back in South Korea's World Cup side (3)
11 Turkish midfield star showing good form for Inter (4)
13 Guatemalan striker whose clubs include Greece's Giannina and LA Galaxy (4)
17 Veteran South Korean midfielder who played with Strasbourg (3)
18 Feyenoord's right-sided Australian midfielder (7)
20 Finland goalkeeper in Britain with Hearts and Southampton (5)
21 Croatian defender who switched from Inter to Milan (5)

DOWN

1 Club Brugge's Brazilian forward (6)
2 Hamburg's left-sided midfielder brought in last summer from St Pauli (4)
3 Ex-Extremadura centre-back of Bochum and Cameroon (5)
4 Lyon man given an international debut by Jacques Santini (5)
5 Former Kenyan national coach more recently at Nigeria's helm (6)
6 Wandering German coach who succeeded Schachner at Austria Wien (4)
12 Teenage Everton forward already causing a stir in the Premiership (6)
14 Zambia's Double winners in 2002 (6)
15 Chelsea's one-time Arsenal and Barcelona Frenchman (5)
16 Senegal's World Cup coach lured to the United Arab Emirates (5)
17 Hajduk Split midfielder who won his first Croatian cap last year (4)
19 Young Kaiserslautern striker previously with Koln (4)

DECEMBER SOLUTION

ACROSS: 1 Paredes, 7 Adani, 8 Accra, 9 Ostrava, 10 Maccarone, 15 Caceres, 18 Abreu, 19 Edman, 20 Inamoto.
DOWN: 1 Platt, 2 Recoba, 3 Diao, 4 Sartor, 5 Jara, 6 Simak, 11 Carini, 12 Nyarko, 13 Ecker, 14 Bruno, 16 Como, 17 Sana.

DECEMBER WINNERS

1st prize: Andre Manche, London.
5 runners-up: Dominique Fariala, Klagenfurt, Austria; Ekhator Peru-Sende, Patra, Greece; Samuel Nti, Koksijde, Belgium; Loke Jia Jie Ian, Singapore; Abubakar Jabbie, Nampula, Mozambique.

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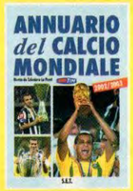

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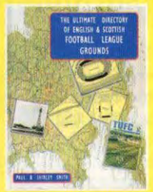

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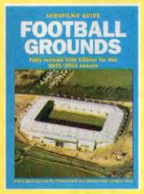

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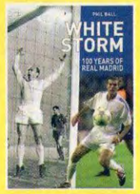

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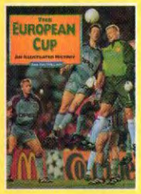

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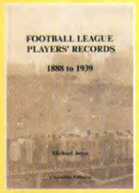

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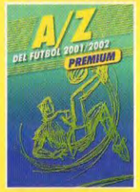

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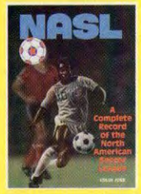

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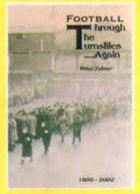

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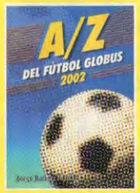

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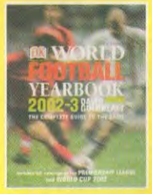

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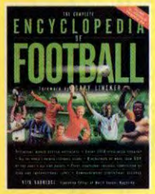

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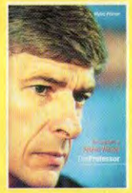

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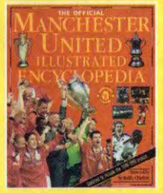

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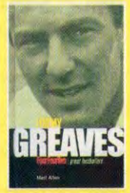

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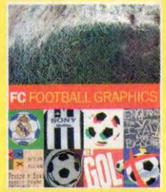

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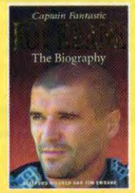

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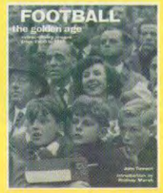

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Home improvements...Partizan's 30,000-capacity stadium is now complemented by a magnificent training complex

Stable and able

In the first of a revived series, Jonathan Wilson reports from the Yugoslav capital

AS THE rest of Europe faces up to the reality of football's economic winter, in Belgrade they are enjoying a long-awaited spring. A decade of sanctions, war and the NATO bombing meant that Yugoslavia played little part in football's boom, but a new stability in the Balkans has coincided with the downturn elsewhere, and clubs such as Partizan and Red Star are determined to take advantage.

Partizan's new coach Lothar Matthaus is hoping to reap the benefits of a situation summed up by his predecessor Ljubisa Tumbakovic, who said: "The economic problems in the West are a bonus for us. We can now build a team without fear of losing two or three of our best young stars to the West every season.

"We are at the beginning of a stable economic situation, and from day to day we are trying to get closer to a Western market. We want to improve the stadium, build a strong and stable team, and hopefully succeed in the Champions League. Then we can reach a common situation both in economics and in sport with the Western teams."

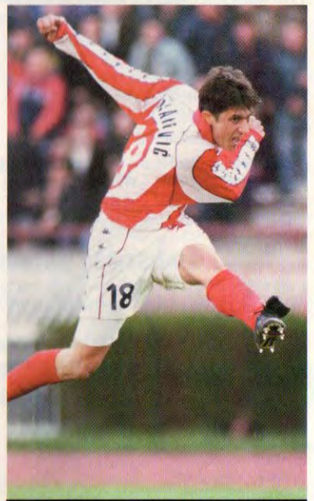
In domestic terms, Partizan prospered in the 1990s, winning five League titles and constructing a magnificent training complex, which will be further extended with the help of PSV as part of the deal that took Mateja Kezman to Eindhoven. "The conditions and the hunger for success are here," said Tumbakovic, but he knows as well as anyone that, during his 10-year tenure – albeit with a year's hiatus at AEK Athens – Partizan failed to produce a significant European campaign.

It was 400 yards from the Partizan stadium, at Red Star's Marakana, that sanctions were felt most keenly. It is easy to forget just how good were the Red Star side that won the European Cup in 1991. Their penalty shoot-out victory over Marseille may have been dull as ditchwater, but there can have been few better balanced midfields than Vladimir Jugovic, Robert Prosinecki, Sinisa Mihajlovic and Dragisa Binic, with Miodrag Belodedici stepping up from the back and Dejan Savicevic dropping off striker Darko Pancev.

Within a year, though, the heart had been ripped out of the side. Captain Stevan Stojanovic, Prosinecki and Binic all left that summer, while UEFA banned the club from playing in Yugoslavia in the 1991-92 season because of the political tensions in the country which led to fragmentation. Despite that, only defeat in their final group game, at 'home' to Sampdoria in Sofia, prevented them reaching a second successive Final.

As the rich got richer elsewhere in Europe, the team disintegrated, and, although the past decade has brought four Yugoslav titles, early European exits have become the norm. Under coach Zoran Filipovic, though, Red Star appear to be stirring too. "We are undergoing a process of rejuvenation," says sports director Dusan Savic. "We have introduced five new players from the Under-18 side and there are just a few older players to compose the team around. We have an obligation to win both the championship and the Cup, but at the moment that is a very hard job."

> 'In previous years Red Star couldn't have survived without selling but I believe we can keep this team together for the next two or three years'
>
> *Marketing manager Zoran Avramovic*



New generation...Red Star's Mihailo Pjanovic

Nonetheless, impressive performances from the likes of Branko Boskovic and Nemanja Vidic against Chievo and Lazio in this season's UEFA Cup speak of good times to come. "In previous years we couldn't have survived without selling, but in the next two or three years, I believe we can keep this team together because they are young," says marketing manager Zoran Avramovic. "We can't ask a player to work here for, say, £10,000, when he has been offered 20 or 50 times more elsewhere – not because he loves Red Star, not because he loves Serbia. So, we have to explain to these young players that if they are 18, they are better off staying here for four or five years."

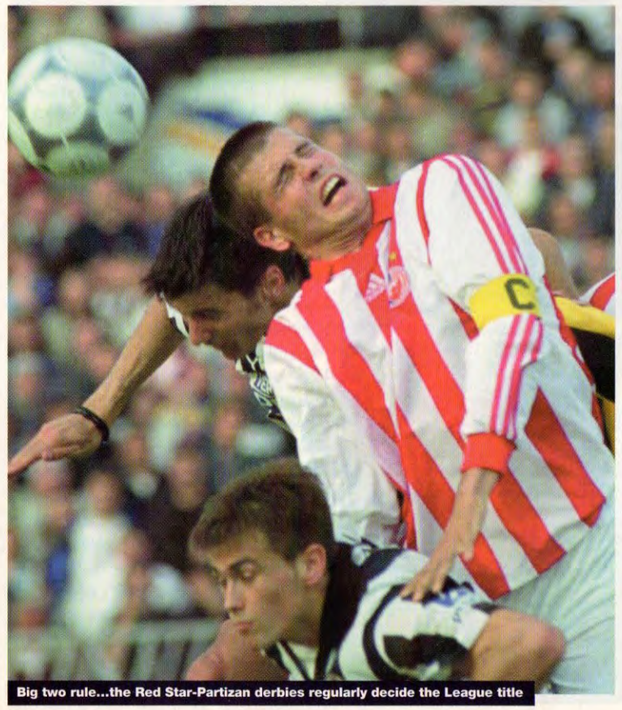
Since 1991, Red Star and Partizan have between them won nine of 11 League titles – allegations of corruption and intimidation continue to sully Obilic's triumph in 1998 – and all 11 Cups. "The derby is the biggest day of the season," says Partizan forward Andrija Delibasic. "It is the only game when the stands are full." Although there have been flickerings at both Zeleznik and OFK this season – and Vojvodina Novi Sad can be outstanding on their day – the title is effectively decided in two games. Not surprisingly, attendances that don't involve either of the big two rarely rise above a few hundred.

"We have to get people into the stadia," Avramovic acknowledges. "At the moment salaries are very low, but people can go home on a Friday, buy a few beers, and over the weekend on TV they can watch maybe seven or eight games from across Europe free of charge. These channels must be cut, or we cannot develop our own game."

He knows also, though, that the dominance of his own club is in itself a problem, that their strength is hindering development. "We have to build a more serious professional League," he says. "If you have a League in which nobody knows who will win, the small clubs can rise, build their own schools and improve. But we still don't know what the best system is. Last year we had 20 clubs in the League, this year 18, next year 16. We are still looking for the best way."

Tumbakovic is rather more optimistic. "The duopoly is starting to change," he insists. "Other clubs are copying Partizan and Red Star, and are creating the right conditions to produce good teams, and that will make the League stronger."

Logically, stability at Red Star and Partizan should also mean they will not be helping themselves to the best clubs in the next tier have to offer. With the West fearing stability as stagnation, the question is how quickly and how far Yugoslavia can catch up.



Big two rule...the Red Star-Partizan derbies regularly decide the League title

The clubs

Lighting-up time...fans show their flair for celebration

CUKARICKI

The club of the Belgrade nouveaux riches, Cukaricki's rapid rise is largely down to the funding they have enjoyed from property company Stankolm. Relegation fears were hardly eased when Miroslav Vukasinovic fell out with the board and left the club at the beginning of December.

OBILIC

Founded in 1924, Obilic, with the Serbian warlord Zeljko Raznatovic, or Arkan, as president, broke the Red Star-Partizan hegemony in 1998. His widow, the singer Ceca, remains in charge, but this has been a mediocre season for Belgrade's third club and coach Mihajlo Bosnjak quit in November.

OFK

The oldest of the Belgrade sides, having been set up as BSK in 1911, Omladinski Futball Klub was traditionally the team of the city's bohemian set. They won the title five times in the 1930s, but despite going into this season's winter break in fourth, the size of their squad makes a sixth triumph highly unlikely.

PARTIZAN

Established as the army side in 1945, Partizan quickly established themselves as one of the big two of Yugoslav football. Just one defeat in the autumn season leaves them firm favourites for an 18th League title and a first for new coach Lothar Matthaus, who took over at Christmas.

RAD

One of the newer clubs, having been founded in 1958, this is looking like the year in which Rad finally lose their position in the top flight. Fourth-bottom at Christmas, much will depend on whether Bosko Djurovski, who replaced Zvonko Varga as coach in November, can turn things around.

RED STAR

Set up by the Communists as the team of Belgrade University in 1945, Red Star have won 21 League titles. The upheaval following the departure of coach Slavoljub Muslin last season and the youth of their squad mean they'll probably be looking at second place this time around.

ZELEZNIK

Without a trophy in 72 years of existence, Zeleznik nonetheless won 11 of 17 games in the first half of the season to leave them second at the winter break. Much credit must go Sasa Nikolic, in his debut season as coach after six years as an assistant, and he was named Coach of the Year for 2002.

ZEMUN

As factory side Galenika, Zemun spent most of the 1950s and 1960s battling relegation, but the fishing town on the Sava, just outside Belgrade, can now boast an established top-flight side. However, inconsistency has rattled boardroom nerves and coach Mihajlo Ivanovic was sacked at the end of the autumn season.

Keir Radnedge
COMMENTARY

Out of place

Europe have lost a berth in the 2006 World Cup allocation

LAST summer's slip-ups by some of Europe's biggest international sides came back to haunt the continent when FIFA handed out places for the 2006 World Cup finals. Europe sent 15 teams to South Korea and Japan but holders France and Portugal fell in the first round, Italy crashed out in the second, and England and Spain were halted in the quarter-finals. The cost of such under-achievement was the loss, to Oceania, of a place at the next finals.

Europe will have only 14 nations in Germany, including the hosts, but UEFA's representatives on the FIFA executive were relieved this was all they needed to concede. "I think it's a reasonable compromise for Europe," said British FIFA vice-president David Will. "Losing one place is a minimum concession in the wider scheme of things."

Europe will probably have eight qualifying groups for 2006, with the winners and two best runners-up going direct to the finals. The remaining six runners-up would play off for the last three slots.

South American officials, however, were furious at having been forced to give ground to the rising stars of football's developing world.

Five South American nations went to the 2002 finals, four guaranteed plus Uruguay, who beat Australia, Oceania's strongest side, in a play-off. Only four can qualify next time and that quartet will have to include Brazil if Ronaldo and co are to defend their title. Of course, the holders no longer benefit from the automatic right of entry to the finals.

The extra slot thrown open will be taken up by the winners of a play-off between candidates from Asia and the CONCACAF region.

The South American federation has formally asked FIFA to revisit the issue and give them a place back. But who will give one up? Europe has already conceded and it certainly won't be Asia, CONCACAF or Africa.

Asia had four nations in South Korea and Japan but that included the joint hosts. In 2006 they will provide four with a possible fifth through the play-off. That means the remarkable achievement of Guus Hiddink's Koreans in reaching the semi-finals last year has secured Asia two extra places.

As for CONCACAF, the United States' progress to the quarter-finals has been rewarded with an almost niggardly extra play-off chance against Asia.

The only region to have stuck firm is Africa, which maintains five places in the finals – but only just. The Africans refused to concede even a play-off against South America. The issue went to a vote, which South America lost.

Top of the world...Ronaldo

Celebration...South Korea's run to the semi-finals last year has earned Asia two extra places in 2006

All sewn up in Madrid

WHY did FIFA take its executive committee and annual gala to Madrid in time to catch the end of Real's centenary?

Simple – back in 1904 before the Spanish federation existed, their football was represented at the founding meeting of FIFA in Paris by one Carlos Padros, president of the amateur sports club Madrid FC. FIFA president Sepp Blatter was thus honouring that chunk of history when he gave the gala a Madrid theme.

Not only were there special presentations to the club (accepted by Alfredo Di Stefano) and a posthumous award in memory of legendary president Santiago Bernabeu, but also each of the various FIFA prizes was handed over by past Real stars: Raymond Kopa from the 1950s, Amancio, Manuel Velazquez and Vicente Del Bosque (the present coach) from the 1960s and early 1970s, Emilio Butragueno and Jorge Valdano from the 1980s, and Valencia goalkeeper Santiago Canizares, a Madrid youth product of the 1990s.

To top it all, Ronaldo and Zinedine Zidane were on stage at the end as first and third in FIFA's World Player poll to receive their awards from last year's winner – who just happened to be team-mate Luis Figo.

Big Phil's backing for Beckham

FIFA gathered its votes for World Player of the Year by canvassing a top three from each national coach. Some 140 responded. Luiz Felipe Scolari, still just about manager of Brazil when the questionnaire went out, made an interesting selection. He could not vote for a Brazilian so he nominated David Beckham as No 1 – presumably in appreciation of the England captain's efforts in that World Cup quarter-final in Shizuoka.

High jump...Beckham's leap inadvertently led to Brazil's equaliser against England

North v South divide in Africa

Six nations – Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa and Tunisia – beat the deadline for applications to host the first African World Cup in 2010.

Popular favourites are South Africa after their high-profile failure to win the 2006 finals. But do not be surprised if they fall short again. The North African/Arab lobby within FIFA is a strong one.

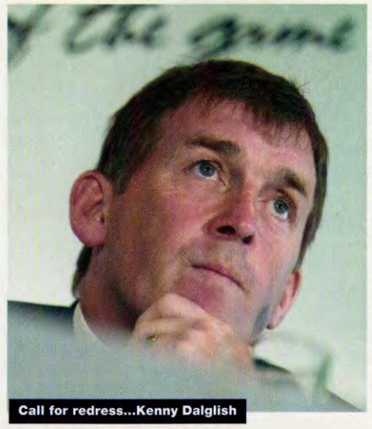
Whingeing Scots have no case

THE domestic whingeing when the Scottish and Irish bid was torpedoed in the 2008 European Championship lottery was disgracefully ill-informed.

If I heard right, even Kenny Dalglish was reported to have lent his name to suggestions that some sort of legal redress might be sought to recover wasted investment.

Scotland and Ireland lost their way for many reasons. Scotland's initial failure to mount a single bid sent out the wrong signal about political support; the farce over a second Irish stadium was suicidal; the need for a sea/air link was a major handicap; the concentration of so many Scottish stadiums in one city (Glasgow) – the list runs long.

This was not about Scots and Irish – and all the rest – losing. Austria and Switzerland triumphed because they had by far the best bid. They were worthy winners. That's the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.



Call for redress...Kenny Dalglish

Home nations' debt to Rous

THE traditional independence of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has been secured for the foreseeable future. The guarantee was given in Madrid by a FIFA president surprised by the strength of resistance to change in the status quo.

Sepp Blatter moved quickly to reposition himself within 24 hours of his executive committee considering proposals not only to reconsider the United Kingdom's four-way split but also to abolish the fixed British vice-presidency of FIFA.

The assault on British powers and privileges was contained in a document presented by a sub-committee charged with revising FIFA's outdated statutes in time for its centenary in 2004. However, European representatives came out fighting and gathered support from South America.

Blatter said: "The proposals recommended changing the British vice-presidency to a normal committee member from Europe. However, voices on the executive said the position of the four British associations based on the contract drawn up in 1946 should be respected and maintained. The strategic studies committee will look at this again in March before a decision on the statutes by Congress in Qatar next October."

While that issue lingers, Blatter was unequivocal in guaranteeing the long-term future of the independent national teams – and FIFA voting status – of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. "Further discussion of this issue is taboo," he said. "The situation of the members of the International Board, which guarantees the laws of the game, is secure."

The board comprises eight members, four from FIFA and one from each of the UK associations. Messing with its credibility would be too problematic even for Blatter.

The British FAs should raise a glass to the memory of Sir Stanley Rous. They owe independence to his cunning in negotiating Britain's return to FIFA after World War Two. The then secretary of the FA, knowing FIFA was virtually bankrupt, bartered proceeds of a Britain v FIFA match in 1947 in exchange for the fixed British vice-presidency and guaranteed maintenance of the four home nations' independent status – the contract to which Blatter referred.

Net profit...leading clubs Marseille (light blue) and Paris Saint-Germain want a bigger slice of the pay-TV pie

Answering the sceptics

Oliver Butler reports on a new deal in France that suggests pay-TV still has a rosy future

THE death of TV as a driver of growing revenues in football appears to have been exaggerated. It is true that the past 12 months has seen the collapse of ITV Digital in England and the insolvency of Kirch in Germany, while in Spain and Italy attempts are being made to prevent the emergence of a single pay-TV station that would drive down revenues.

But, in England, the Champions League rights from next season have recently been sold at a higher price than before, while Premier League chief executive Richard Scudamore is confident of maintaining the £1.1billion Sky paid last time round.

The biggest shock to the system has been in France, where the League has just secured a 50 per cent rise in the value of live rights to top-flight football from 2004 until 2007. The money paid by pay-TV channels for football in France had always been regarded as inferior to the levels achieved in other major European countries, valued at around £30 per subscriber, compared to £50 in England and over £60 in Germany and Italy.

Yet when League president Frederic Thiriez spoke of the rising popularity of football and his confidence that the value of around £200million a year would be maintained, most observers thought it was just bravado. Privately, many club presidents were talking of a 5 per cent drop. Wasn't Vivendi Universal – the parent company of Canal Plus, the mainstay of live football in France over the past decade – in financial problems and seeking to cut costs? Hadn't its smaller rival TPS only started showing football three years previously? Weren't the two companies about to follow the trend across Europe and merge their pay-TV operations to stem losses?

> 'Canal Plus, knowing that 41 per cent of its subscribers would leave if it stopped football coverage, bid £320m – the second highest figure in Europe – for exclusive League rights'

Thiriez saw that the time to act was now, before the two entered formal talks and while they still maintained a rivalry, jockeying for position before a merger. Competition among pay-TV broadcasters had fuelled the rise in TV rights values around Europe, and Thiriez realised that he had to make hay while the sun shone. So, almost two years before the rights were due to start, talks began.

Nevertheless, many observers still felt that the rights would be carved up in a classic French compromise, with all parties emerging with something. To counter this, Thiriez cleverly repackaged the rights so that what was on offer was not the same as before. The highlights show that had previously been separate and held by Canal Plus was now included with one live game a week, the package that TPS currently held.

And the rules of competition held sway. Canal Plus, with the knowledge that 41 per cent of its 4.5 million subscribers had said they would leave if it stopped its coverage of football and that TPS's subscribers would be of similar opinion, bid £320m for the exclusive ownership of the three packages covering Ligue 1 football. This put French TV rights second behind England (£525m for the 2002-03 season) in value and ahead of Italy (£300m), Spain (£200m) and Germany (£190m).

TPS had bid £285m for the same exclusivity. A compromise was attempted by Thiriez, who offered TPS to share the pay-per-view rights, but an embittered TPS rejected what it saw as an unfair bidding process. Patrick Le Lay, a TPS shareholder, claimed they actually outbid Canal Plus on each of the three rights packages, and that Canal Plus' exclusivity bonus offer, which valued the total package higher, was illegal. He has now sought a decision from the French competition authorities, which is due at the time of going to press.

Furthermore, TPS claimed that the decision taken by the League board was not impartial as four of its members had already signed a separate deal with Canal Plus, giving the broadcaster first option on the League's TV rights should the clubs gain ownership of them.

Separately, Canal Plus has separate deals with around a dozen top French clubs to exploit other media rights. "In any company, one is not authorised to vote for a company with which it is economically linked," Le Lay argued. "On ethical and moral grounds you abstain." As did the president of Bordeaux, whose main shareholder is also a shareholder of TPS.

Even if the decision to award Canal Plus is ruled illegal, with the broadcasters having laid their cards on the table, whatever deal is then struck will still be significantly superior to the present one. This will be seen as a triumph for Thiriez, who has been in the post for only a year.

However, he will not be allowed to rest on his laurels, as inevitably the rise in revenue has triggered a dispute over its distribution. The big clubs, such as Marseille and Paris Saint-Germain, are seeking a bigger share of the enlarged pie.

Marseille president Christophe Bouchet has threatened legal action against the present system, under which each of the 20 Ligue 1 clubs receive an equal share. The League has proposed to share half the money according to performance and half equally, but Bouchet wants a system similar to England, where TV appearances are rewarded. "We generate around a quarter of the revenues [through live TV games] and yet receive only one-twentieth," he argues.

Thiriez will have his skills tested once more to find a solution.

Oliver Butler is editor of Soccer Investor

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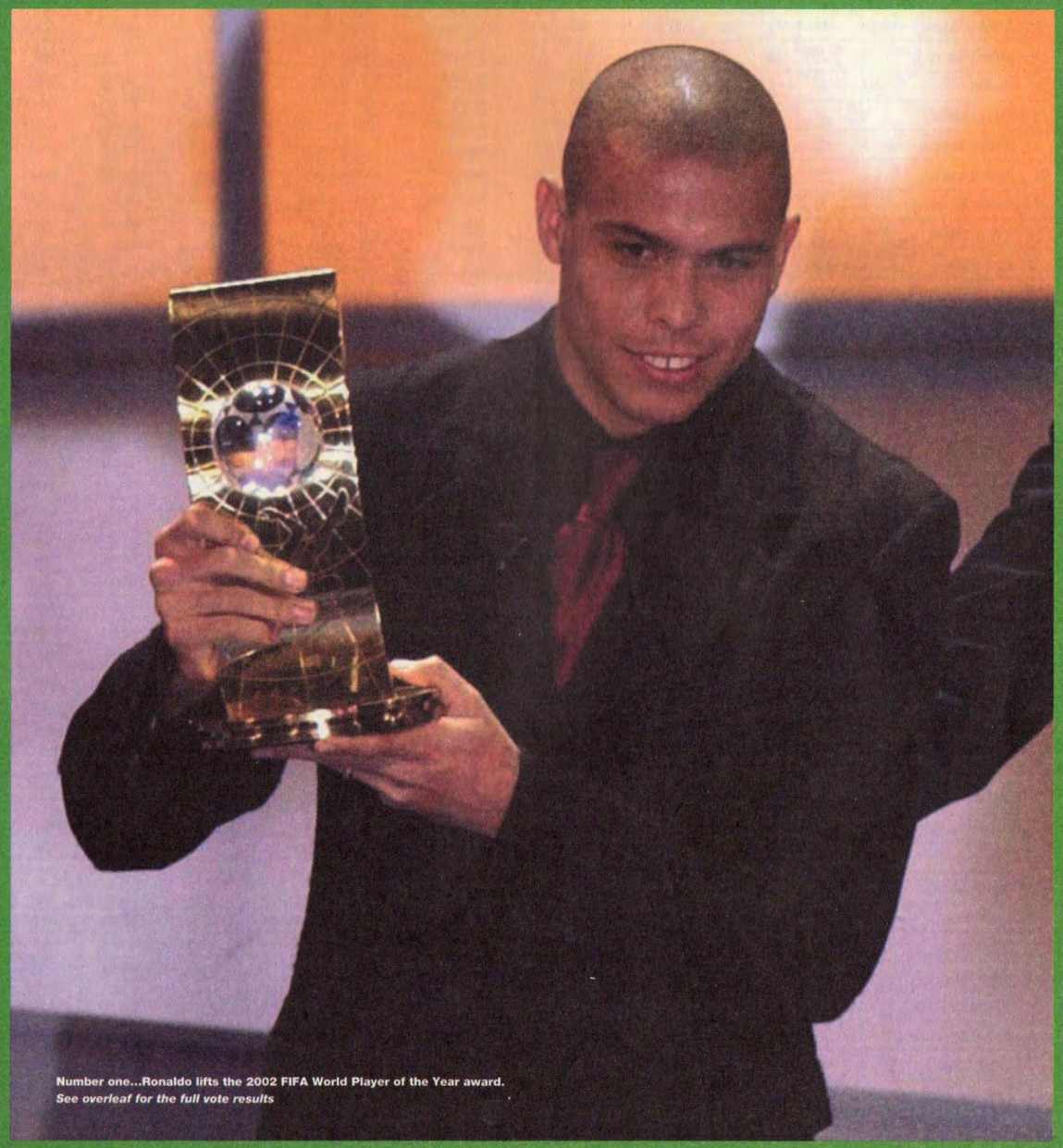
WORLDSERVICE

FOOTBALL'S BIGGEST & MOST RESPECTED RESULTS SECTION

RESULTS FEBRUARY 2003



Number one...Ronaldo lifts the 2002 FIFA World Player of the Year award.
See overleaf for the full vote results

FIFA WORLD PLAYER 2002

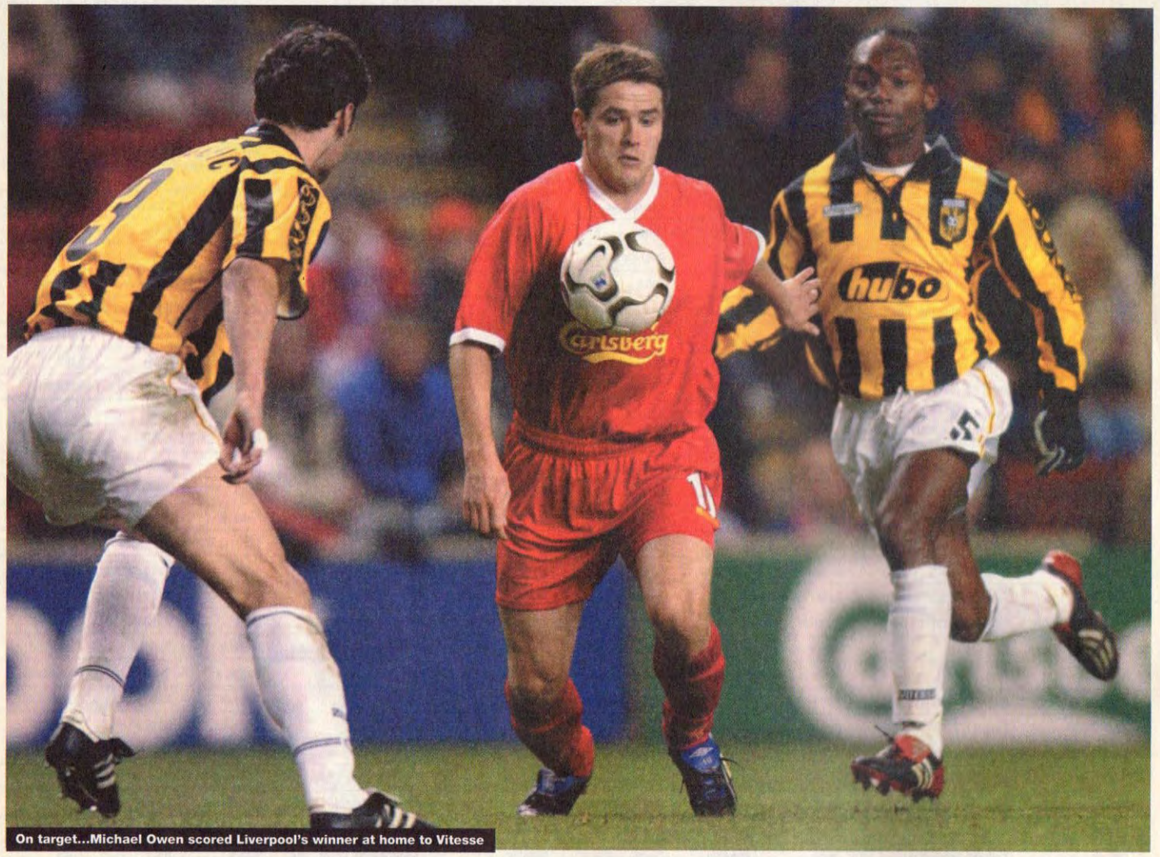
THE FULL VOTE RESULTS

FIFA invited every national coach to vote for their World Player of the Year, plus a second and third choice; 148 national associations responded. First-place choices were awarded five points each, runners-up three points and third places one point.

	PLAYER	1st pl	x5pts	2nd pl	x3pts	3rd pl	x1pt	Total pts
1	Ronaldo	59	295	28	84	8	8	387
2	Oliver Kahn	16	80	24	72	19	19	171
3	Zinedine Zidane	18	90	13	39	19	19	148
4	Roberto Carlos	15	75	10	30	9	9	114
5	Rivaldo	12	60	8	24	8	8	92
6	Raul Gonzalez	9	45	11	33	12	12	90
7	Michael Ballack	5	25	14	42	15	15	82
8	David Beckham	1	5	11	33	13	13	51
9	Thierry Henry	4	20	4	12	6	6	38
10	Michael Owen	3	15	5	15	4	4	34
11	Ronaldinho	1	5	3	9	5	5	19
12	Patrick Vieira	1	5	2	6	3	3	14
13	Luis Figo	0	0	2	6	4	4	10
14	Francesco Totti	1	5	1	3	1	1	9
15	Christian Vieri	0	0	2	6	0	0	6
	Hasan Sas	0	0	1	3	3	3	6
17	Gabriel Batistuta	1	5	0	0	0	0	5
	Patrick Kluivert	1	5	0	0	0	0	5
	Alvaro Recoba	1	5	0	0	0	0	5
	El Hadji Diouf	0	0	1	3	2	2	5
	Hong Myung-bo	0	0	1	3	2	2	5
22	Alessandro Del Piero	0	0	1	3	1	1	4
	Paolo Maldini	0	0	1	3	1	1	4
24	Yildiray Basturk	0	0	1	3	0	0	3
	Edmilson	0	0	1	3	0	0	3
	Lucio	0	0	1	3	0	0	3
	Robert Pires	0	0	1	3	0	0	3
	Juan Sebastian Veron	0	0	1	3	0	0	3
29	Landon Donovan	0	0	0	0	2	2	2
	Alessandro Nesta	0	0	0	0	2	2	2
31	Cafu	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Iker Casillas	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Ilhan Mansiz	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Filippo Inzaghi	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Kleberson	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Hidetoshi Nakata	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Manuel Rui Costa	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Lilian Thuram	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Ruud Van Nistelrooy	0	0	0	0	1	1	1

HOW THE COACHES VOTED

COUNTRY	COACH	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD
Algeria	Hamid Zouba	Zidane	Henry	Ronaldo
American Samoa	Lui Tunoa	Ronaldo	Kahn	Beckham
Andorra	David Rodrigo	Roberto Carlos	Ballack	Zidane
Antigua & Barbuda	Walter Gama	Roberto Carlos	Edmilson	Ronaldinho
Argentina	Marcelo Bielsa	Raul	Henry	Thuram
Armenia	Oscar Lopez	Owen	Ronaldo	Raul
Australia	Frank Farina	Raul	Ballack	Roberto Carlos
Austria	Hans Krankl	Ronaldo	Raul	Van Nistelrooy
Azerbaijan	Asger Abdullayev	Rivaldo	Ronaldo	Kahn
Bahamas	Gary White (tech. dir.)	Kahn	Zidane	Ronaldo
Bahrain	Wolfgang Sidka	Kahn	Ronaldo	Rivaldo
Bangladesh	George Kottaun	Ronaldo	Kahn	Zidane
Barbados	Kenville Layne	Kahn	Ballack	Roberto Carlos
Belarus	Eduard Malofeyev	Ronaldo	Raul	Owen
Belgium	Aime Anthuenis	Roberto Carlos	Henry	Zidane
Belize	Eduardo Santana	Ronaldo	Rivaldo	Raul
Bhutan	Sonam Mindu Dinesh	Ronaldo	Beckham	H Nakata
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Blaz Sliskovic	Ronaldo	Rivaldo	Kahn
Botswana	Veselin Jelusic	Rivaldo	Ronaldo	Kahn
Brazil	Luiz Felipe Scolari	Beckham	Zidane	Figo
Bulgaria	Plamen Markov	Ronaldo	Kahn	Zidane
Burkina Faso	Jean Paul Rabier	Ronaldo	Zidane	F Inzaghi
Burundi	Dominique Niyonzima	Kahn	Ronaldo	Vieira
Cambodia	Joachim Fickert	Kahn	Raul	Ballack
Cameroon	Joseph Omog	Ronaldo	Kahn	Rivaldo
Canada	Holger Osieck	Ronaldo	Kahn	Ballack
Cape Verde Islands	Oscar Duarte	Kahn	Ronaldo	Donovan
Cayman Islands	Marcio Maximo Barcello	Ronaldo	Ronaldinho	Henry
Chile	Cesar Vaccia	Henry	Raul	Zidane
China	Shen Xiangfu	Ronaldo	Rivaldo	Rui Costa
Colombia	Francisco Maturana	Roberto Carlos	Ronaldo	Kahn
Congo	Alain Nestor Ngouinda	Ronaldo	Kahn	Cafu
Cook Islands	Maurice Tillotson (tech. dir.)	Ronaldo	Beckham	Henry
Costa Rica	Steve Sampson	Roberto Carlos	Beckham	Raul
Croatia	Otto Baric	Ronaldo	Henry	Kahn
Cyprus	Motsa Vukotic	Raul	Ronaldo	Ballack
Czech Republic	Karel Bruckner	Rivaldo	Ronaldo	Beckham
Denmark	Morten Olsen	Zidane	Raul	Roberto Carlos
Djibouti	Hasan Mohamed Kanu	Zidane	Diouf	Raul
Ecuador	Hernan Dario Gomez	Ronaldo	Kahn	Zidane
Egypt	Moasen Saleh	Zidane	Figo	Owen
El Salvador	Armando Contreras Palma	Kluivert	Roberto Carlos	Ronaldo
England	Sven Goran Eriksson	Roberto Carlos	Ballack	Zidane
Eritrea	Tekie Abraha	Zidane	Ronaldo	Roberto Carlos
Estonia	Arno Pijpers	Roberto Carlos	Kahn	Zidane
Ethiopia	Jochen Figge	Kahn	Ronaldo	Roberto Carlos
Faroe Islands	Henrik Larsen	Rivaldo	Maldini	Zidane
Fiji	Les Scheinflug	Zidane	Vieri	Beckham
Finland	Antti Muurinen	Ronaldo	Ballack	Roberto Carlos
France	Jacques Santini	Owen	Raul	Kahn
Gambia	Sang John Ditong	Zidane	Ronaldo	Figo
Georgia	Alexander Chivadze	Ronaldo	Roberto Carlos	Ballack
Germany	Rudi Voller	Zidane	Lucio	Ronaldinho
Greece	Otto Rehhagel	Rivaldo	Roberto Carlos	Kahn
Guatemala	Julio Cesar Cortez	Ronaldo	Kahn	Roberto Carlos
Guinea-Bissau	Cande Baciro	Ronaldo	Figo	Kahn
Guyana	Neider Colmerauer Dos Santos	Rivaldo	Ronaldinho	Ronaldo
Holland	Dick Advocaat	Henry	Vieira	Ballack
Honduras	Jose de la Paz Herrera	Ronaldo	Raul	Zidane
Hong Kong	Kwok Ka-ming	Roberto Carlos	Beckham	Zidane
Hungary	Imre Gellei	Ronaldo	Roberto Carlos	Kahn
Iceland	Atli Edvaldsson	Kahn	Ronaldo	Ronaldinho
India	Stephen Constantine	Zidane	Vieira	Ballack
Indonesia	Jopie Leepel	Ronaldo	Beckham	Rivaldo
Iran	Branko Ivankovic	Raul	Zidane	Totti
Iraq	Adnan Hamd	Ronaldo	Owen	Rivaldo
Israel	Grant Avram	Raul	Beckham	Ballack
Italy	Giovanni Trapattoni	Roberto Carlos	Kahn	Raul
Ivory Coast	Robert Nouzaret	Ronaldo	Zidane	Vieira
Jamaica	Carl Brown	Henry	Ronaldo	Rivaldo
Japan	Zico	Roberto Carlos	Rivaldo	Ronaldo
Jordan	Mahmoud Elgohary	Recoba	Ballack	Roberto Carlos
Kazakhstan	Yevgeniy Ilin (tech. dir.)	Ronaldo	Ballack	Kahn
Kuwait	Radojko Avramovic	Ronaldo	Kahn	Hasan Sas
Kyrgyzstan	Almaz Chokmorov	Zidane	Ronaldo	Hong Myung-bo
Latvia	Aleksandr Starkovs	Ronaldo	Kahn	Roberto Carlos
Lebanon	Richard Tardy	Zidane	Owen	Ronaldo
Liberia	Kadalah Kromah	Owen	Ronaldo	Diouf
Liechtenstein	Ralf Loose	Kahn	Ronaldo	Ballack
Lithuania	Gintas Buzas	Ronaldo	Ballack	Hasan Sas
Luxembourg	Allan Simonsen	Ballack	Zidane	Ronaldo
Macedonia	Nikola Ilievski	Ronaldo	Vieri	Raul
Malaysia	Allan Harris	Ronaldo	Ballack	Kahn
Maldives	Joseph Jankech	Ronaldo	Rivaldo	Ballack
Malta	Sigfried Held	Kahn	Ronaldo	Zidane
Mauritius	Patrick-Claude Parizon	Ronaldo	Ballack	Zidane
Mexico	Alberto Aguilar Mijes	Kahn	Roberto Carlos	Donovan
Moldova	Victor Pasulko	Ronaldo	Zidane	Kahn
Montserrat	Ottley Laborde	Ronaldo	Beckham	Figo
Mozambique	Martinho Fernandes	Ronaldo	Beckham	Zidane
Myanmar	David Booth	Raul	Owen	Maldini
Namibia	Peter Ueberjahn	Rivaldo	Zidane	Kahn
New Zealand	Mick Waitt	Rivaldo	Raul	Ballack
Nicaragua	Florencio Leika	Ronaldo	Beckham	Ballack
Niger	Harouna Doula	Ronaldo	Kahn	Raul
Nigeria	Christian Chukwu	Roberto Carlos	Owen	Diouf
Northern Ireland	Sammy McIlroy	Raul	Pires	Henry
Norway	Nils Johan Semb	Kahn	Zidane	Ballack
Oman	Milan Macala	Henry	Rivaldo	Beckham
Pakistan	Jozef Herel	Kahn	Ronaldo	Beckham
Palestine	Inge Veshesnke	Ronaldo	Zidane	Figo
Panama	Carlos Alberto da Luz	Ronaldo	Rivaldo	Kleberson
Paraguay	Anibal Ruiz	Zidane	Ronaldo	Beckham
Peru	Cesar Gonzalez Hurtado	Ronaldo	Veron	Kahn
Philippines	Sugao Kambe	Ronaldo	Kahn	Rivaldo
Poland	Zbigniew Boniek	Totti	Ronaldo	Ballack
Portugal	Agostinho Oliveira	Raul	Roberto Carlos	Ballack
Qatar	Pierre Lechantre	Roberto Carlos	Kahn	Zidane
Republic of Ireland	Don Givens	Ronaldo	Raul	Kahn
Romania	Anghel Iordanescu	Ronaldo	Beckham	Kahn
Russia	Valeri Gazzayev	Ronaldo	Kahn	Zidane
San Marino	Giampaolo Mazza	Roberto Carlos	Del Piero	Ballack
Scotland	Berti Vogts	Ballack	Rivaldo	Nesta
Senegal	Abdoulaye Sarr	Kahn	Ronaldo	Zidane
Seychelles	Dominique Bathenay	Ballack	Zidane	Raul
Singapore	Jan Poulsen	Roberto Carlos	Ballack	Henry
Slovakia	Ladislav Jurkemik	Zidane	Kahn	Ronaldo
Slovenia	Bojan Prasnikar	Zidane	Roberto Carlos	Beckham
Somalia	Abdi Farah Ali	Kahn	Ronaldo	Ilhan
South Africa	Ephram Shailes Mashaba	Ronaldo	Ballack	Raul
South Korea	Kim Ho-kon	Ronaldo	Owen	Beckham
Spain	Inaki Saez	Ballack	Kahn	Ronaldinho
Sri Lanka	P D Sirisena	Rivaldo	Hasan Sas	Beckham
St Kitts & Nevis	Eric Winstanley	Zidane	Ronaldo	Rivaldo
Sudan	Ahmed Babiker Elfaki	Ronaldo	Roberto Carlos	Zidane
Surinam	Andy Atmodimedjo	Rivaldo	Zidane	Beckham
Swaziland	Dumisa Mahlalela	Kahn	Ronaldo	Ronaldinho
Sweden	T Soderberg/L Lagerback	Vieira	Raul	Kahn
Switzerland	Kobi Kuhn	Ronaldo	Ronaldinho	Kahn
Syria	Milosav Radenovic	Ballack	Hong Myung-bo	Hasan Sas
Tahiti	Patrick Jacquemet	Zidane	Ronaldo	Kahn
Taiwan	Huang Jun-chen	Batistuta	Totti	Casillas
Thailand	Peter Withe	Ronaldo	Beckham	Rivaldo
Tonga	Milan Jankovic	Ronaldo	Basturk	Raul
Trinidad & Tobago	Jamaal Shabazz	Ronaldinho	Roberto Carlos	Raul
Tunisia	Roger Lemerre	Zidane	Ballack	Henry
Turkey	Senol Gunes	Ronaldo	Ballack	Raul
Turks & Caicos Is	Charlie Cook (tech. dir.)	Rivaldo	Ronaldo	Hong Myung-bo
Ukraine	Leonid Buriak	Zidane	Raul	Nesta
United States	Bruce Arena	Raul	Kahn	Henry
Uruguay	Osvaldo Gimenez	Rivaldo	Kahn	Beckham
US Virgin Islands	William Ramirez	Ronaldo	Kahn	Beckham
Uzbekistan	Ravshan Haydarov	Ronaldo	Kahn	Beckham
Venezuela	Ricardo Paez	Ronaldo	Kahn	Zidane
Vietnam	Henrique Calisto	Roberto Carlos	Ronaldo	Owen
Yemen	Salem Abdulrahman Salem	Ronaldo	Kahn	Owen
Yugoslavia	Dejan Savicevic	Ronaldo	Roberto Carlos	Del Piero
Zimbabwe	Sunday Marimo	Ronaldo	Zidane	Vieira



On target...Michael Owen scored Liverpool's winner at home to Vitesse

Liverpool cruise through

LIVERPOOL found respite from their form slip in the Premiership by defeating Vitesse Arnhem comfortably to lead the race into the fourth round of the UEFA Cup.

Michael Owen's 21st-minute goal earned a 1-0 home win in the second leg to complete a 2-0 aggregate victory. Owen thus took his tally in European competition to 19 goals, one fewer than Ian Rush's club record.

Manager Gerard Houllier, having seen his side beaten in four of their previous five Premiership outings, was relieved. He said: "It was a very professional performance. When you are in troubled waters you have to refocus, and I thought our attitude was perfect."

Vitesse threatened only twice – once when Belgian centre-forward Bob Peeters headed against a post after 18 minutes and then in the closing stages when Peeters was foiled by a sharp save from keeper Chris Kirkland.

● 'We put in a very professional performance against Vitesse. When you are in troubled waters you have to refocus, and I thought our attitude was perfect'
Gerard Houllier

Liverpool, winners of the UEFA Cup two years ago, were the only English side to make the fourth round. InterToto co-winners Fulham lost 2-1 on aggregate to Hertha Berlin, and Leeds went out 2-1 to Malaga despite having forced a goalless draw in the first leg in Spain. Malaga owed victory at Elland Road to a goal in each half from Panamanian veteran Julio Dely Valdes.

Not that Spain emerged unscathed from the third round. Betis lost 2-1 on aggregate to Champions League fallers Auxerre (who now face Liverpool), while Celta Vigo lost on the away goals rule after finishing 2-2 overall with Scotland's Celtic.

Italy's sole survivors made it through, financially confused Lazio beating Sturm Graz 3-2 despite losing the second leg 1-0 at home to a late strike from Imre Szabics.

Germany demonstrated slightly greater strength in depth than England, Spain and Italy by sending two teams into the fourth round. Hertha were followed by Stuttgart (3-1 winners over Club Brugge), but Schalke lost surprisingly to Poland's Wisla Krakow after collapsing 4-1 in the home second leg.

Greece, Portugal and Turkey also have two hopefuls remaining. For the Greeks, Panathinaikos and AEK scored an Athens double over Liberec and Maccabi Haifa respectively. Portuguese neighbours FC Porto and Boavista both knocked out French opposition in Lens and Paris Saint-Germain, while Besiktas and Denizlispor kept the Turkish flag flying at the expense of Kyiv Dynamo and Lyon. In fact, France were reduced from five survivors to one (Auxerre) with Bordeaux also falling, to Anderlecht.

The fourth round was completed by Slavia Prague, who beat PAOK Salonika 4-1 overall after a 4-0 second leg win wrapped up by two goals in the last few minutes from veteran striker Pavel Kuka.

Keir Radnedge

Barça on brink of new record

BARCELONA can equal a European club record if they defeat **Group A** opponents Internazionale when the Champions League second phase resumes. Success for Louis Van Gaal's men on February 18 will bring them level on 11 successive victories with Ajax, who set the target over two seasons of the now-defunct Cup-winners Cup in 1987 and 1988.

The Catalans equalled the Champions League record of 10 consecutive wins – set by Milan in 1992-93 – when they defeated Newcastle United 3-1 in their second phase sign-off in December.

It was an unhappy return for Sir Bobby Robson, Barcelona boss in 1996-97. The match was postponed 24 hours after heavy rain flooded Camp Nou but it took Dani Garcia only seven minutes to secure an advantage for Barcelona as he converted Xavi's cross the following evening.

Newcastle, missing suspended strikers Alan Shearer and Craig Bellamy, equalised through stand-in Shola Ameobi. Barcelona then regained the lead through Patrick Kluivert 10 minutes before the break and substitute Gaizka Mendieta and Juan Riquelme were close to further goals.

Eventually, Thiago Motta headed the third, which was allowed to stand despite Newcastle claims that the ball had not crossed the line. Kieron Dyer, apparently in a world of his own on the back post, was at fault for a lack of concentration.

Victory kept Barcelona level on points with Internazionale, who beat Bayer Leverkusen 3-2 with two goals from a revived Luigi Di Biagio and an own goal from keeper Hans-Jorg Butt. Bayer twice fought back in vain through Boris Zivkovic and Brazilian substitute Franca in injury time.

Inter coach Hector Cuper was pleased with the way his team coped in the absence of three regular defenders and then after injuries forced the early departures of Di Biagio and Christian Vieri.

Bayer boss Klaus Toppmoller insisted his side were far from out of the reckoning despite their second successive defeat. He said: "In the first phase we lost our opening two games and I said it would be possible to recover and it was."

In **Group B** Ajax made light of a lengthy injury list and sub-zero conditions when they took advantage of a goalkeeping blunder by Francesco Antonioli to beat Roma 2-1 to follow up their opening 1-1 draw in Valencia. Ajax won on goals in each half from Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who benefited from Antonioli's failure to hold a shot from South African Steven Pienaar, and second-half substitute Jari Litmanen.

Roma replied through a header from substitute Gabriel Batistuta with two minutes to play.

Valencia drew yet again when they held Arsenal goalless at Highbury despite playing for the last 18 minutes with only 10 men after the expulsion of midfielder Miguel Angel Angulo for elbowing Pascal Cygan.

Arsenal have thus won only one of their last five home Champions League games – the 2-0 victory over Borussia Dortmund in September. Manager Arsene Wenger said: "We do not fear anyone, but at this level the quality of all the teams is high and the group will only be decided at the very end."

Holders Real Madrid allowed Lokomotiv Moscow to grab a 2-2 draw in the Estadio Bernabeu in **Group C**. Indeed, had referee Graham Barber not blown his whistle when James Obiorah was through on goal, the Russians might well have won. Madrid ended the year bottom of the group despite going ahead through Raul (21 minutes).

Lokomotiv hit back to take the lead through strikes from substitute Obiorah and Benni Mnguni. Raul bundled in a late equaliser. For Madrid, Luis Figo also hit the bar, but Ronaldo, still awaiting his first Champions League goal, missed two good chances and was substituted because of injury at half-time.

Madrid coach Vicente Del Bosque still managed to look on the bright side, saying: "There are still plenty of points to play for and it would be premature to say we are fighting for second place in the group. I hope our experience in Europe will allow us to turn things round."

Group leaders Milan beat Borussia Dortmund 1-0 away courtesy of a second-half goal from Pippo Inzaghi. Dortmund were close to an equaliser but Czech playmaker Tomas Rosicky saw a fierce drive hit the bar. Alessandro Nesta and veteran skipper Paolo Maldini were outstanding as Milan hung on in the closing stages.

In **Group D** Juventus ruthlessly exposed the defensive frailties of Basle to win 4-0 in the Stadio delle Alpi on goals from David Trezeguet, Paolo Montero, Alessio Tacchinardi and Alessandro Del Piero (penalty).

Juventus led 3-0 at the interval and left Basle no opportunity to find the form that had edged them ahead of Liverpool and Moscow Spartak in the first group phase.

Manchester United kept pace with Juventus at the top of the group after beating Deportivo La Coruna 2-0 at Old Trafford despite starting without the injured Roy Keane. Ruud Van Nistelrooy struck both goals.

Keir Radnedge

Shoulder to shoulder...Barça's Puyol vies with Robert of Newcastle

INTERNATIONALS

Sunday, December 8

Dec 8 - Bangkok - friendly
Thailand 2 (Therdsak 2)
Vietnam 1 (Huynh Hong Son)
HT: 1-1

Wednesday, December 11

Dec 11 - Kuala Lumpur - friendly
Malaysia 5 (Hairuddin, Indra, Akmal, Zainizam 2)
Cambodia 0
HT: 2-0

Dec 11 - Singapore - friendly
Singapore 2 (Goncalves 71, Daud 90)
Philippines 0
HT: 0-0

Sunday, December 15

Dec 15 - Accra - friendly
Ghana 0
Nigeria 1 (D Yeboah og 13)
HT: 0-1

Monday, December 16

Dec 16 - UAE - friendly
United Arab Emirates 1
Egypt 2
HT: 0-1

Tuesday, December 17

Dec 17 - Gaborone - friendly
Botswana 1 (Selolwane 20)
Zambia 0
HT: 1-0

Sunday, December 22

Dec 22 - friendly
Egypt 0
Ghana 0

CECAFA CUP

(Council of East and Central African Football Associations Senior Challenge Cup)

In Tanzania

Group A

Nov 30 - Mwanza
Tanzania 1 (Morris 9)
Kenya 0
HT: 1-0

Dec 1 - Mwanza
Burundi 1 (Juma 83)
Eritrea 1 (Sesemaye)
HT: 0-0

Dec 2 - Mwanza
Tanzania 1 (Edward 80)
Sudan 1 (Kabir 82)
HT: 0-0

Dec 3 - Mwanza
Kenya 1 (Oliech 45)
Burundi 1 (Abdallah pen 75)
HT: 1-0

Dec 4 - Mwanza
Eritrea 2 (Dedesaye 14, 45)
Sudan 1 (Agabishido 85)
HT: 2-0

Dec 5 - Mwanza
Burundi 0
Tanzania 2 (Machupa 4, 36)
HT: 0-2

Dec 6 - Mwanza
Kenya 4 (Baraza 59, 90, Oliech 69, 82)
Eritrea 1 (Aregai 77)
HT: 0-0

Dec 7 - Mwanza
Sudan 2 (Gomal 38, Mohammed 75)
Burundi 1 (Msabah 22)
HT: 1-1

Dec 8 - Mwanza
Eritrea 1 (Pasemaye 45)
Tanzania 1 (Mwakigwe 24)
HT: 1-1

Dec 9 - Mwanza
Sudan 0
Kenya 1 (Oliech 75)
HT: 0-0

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tanzania	4	2	2	0	5	2	8
Kenya	4	2	1	1	6	3	7
Eritrea	4	1	2	1	5	7	5
Sudan	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
Burundi	4	0	2	2	3	6	2

Group B

Nov 30 - Arusha
Rwanda 1 (Gatete 12)
Zanzibar 0
HT: 1-0

Dec 1 - Arusha
Somalia 0
Uganda 2 (Sserunkuma 48, Tabula 53)
HT: 0-0

Dec 2 - Arusha
Ethiopia 0
Zanzibar 0

Dec 3 - Arusha
Somalia 0
Rwanda 1 (Karekezi 53)
HT: 0-0

Dec 4 - Arusha
Uganda 3 (Alamarew og 17, Kaweesa 49, Sserunkuma 52)
Ethiopia 0
HT: 1-0

Dec 5 - Arusha
Zanzibar 1 (Ali 39)
Somalia 0
HT: 1-0

Dec 6 - Arusha
Uganda 2 (Yusuf 3, Sserunkuma 43)
Rwanda 1 (Kizito og 30)
HT: 2-1

Dec 7 - Arusha
Ethiopia 0
Somalia 1

Dec 8 - Arusha
Zanzibar 0
Uganda 2 (Masaba 29, Tabula 88)
HT: 0-1

Dec 9 - Arusha
Rwanda 1 (Nsengiyumva 85)
Ethiopia 0
HT: 0-0

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uganda	4	4	0	0	9	1	12
Rwanda	4	3	0	1	4	2	9
Zanzibar	4	1	1	2	1	3	4
Somalia	4	1	0	3	1	4	3
Ethiopia	4	0	1	3	0	5	1

Semi-finals

Dec 11 - Mwanza
Tanzania 3 (Mtiro 44, Edward 69, Machupa 83)
Rwanda 0
HT: 1-1
Tanzania: Kaseja - Mexime, Modest, Victor, Pawasa, Matola, Mwakigwe, Edward, Machupa, Gabriel (Katwila 74), Mtiro (Mwanakusha 69).
Rwanda: Claude - Pappy, Kheri, Mana (Marie 68), Nshimiyamana (Theoneste 46), Habyarimana, Elias, Abdul, Jeannot, Gatete (Rama 75), Hassan.

Dec 12 - Mwanza
Uganda 1 (Obwin 33)
Kenya 3 (Mathenge 17, Oyuga 52, Mambo 66)
HT: 1-1
Uganda: Salim - Obwin, Kizito, Mubiru, Balyejusa, Bossa, Masaba, Kaweesa (Kaaya), Kinene, Ssozi, Tabula. *Sent off: Kinene 24min.*
Kenya: Onyango - Agina, Shaban, Opiyo, Waweru, Mathenge, Odede, Mambo, Oyuga (Baraza), Karanja, Chinjili (Oliech).

Third-place play-off

Dec 14 - Mwanza
Uganda 1 (Mulyanga)
Rwanda 2 (Sibomana, Balizuwa)

Final

Dec 14 - Mwanza
Tanzania 2 (Gabriel 28, Mexime pen 59)
Kenya 3 (Oyuga 30, Baraza 70, Oliech 72)
HT: 1-1
Kenya: Onyango - Shaban, Agina, Waweru, Opiyo, Mambo, Mathenge, Karanja, Mulama (Osama), Chinjili (Oliech), Oyuga (Baraza).

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Dec 7 - Manama
Bahrain 0
Jordan 3 (Mansour 4, Qassem 60, Al-Zaboun 86)
HT: 0-1

Dec 7 - Manama
China 3 (Zhao Junzhe 32, Wang Xinxin 38, Xu Yunlong 41)
Syria 1 (Al-Houssain 35)
HT: 3-1

Dec 9 - Manama
Bahrain 2 (Hassan 30, R Al-Doseri pen 32)
Syria 3 (Al-Khateeb 15, 70, Mousa pen)

Dec 9 - Manama
Jordan 0
China 0
Sent off: Abu Zema (Jordan)

Dec 12 - Manama
Bahrain 2 (Salmeen 22, Hussain 36)
China 2 (Wang Xinxin 16, Qu Bo 61)
HT: 2-1

Dec 12 - Manama
Syria 0
Jordan 3 (Al-Zaboun 12, Halasa 51, Mansoor 56)
HT: 0-1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jordan	3	2	1	0	6	0	7
China	3	1	2	0	5	3	5
Syria	3	1	0	2	4	8	3
Bahrain	3	0	1	2	4	8	1

TIGER CUP

In Indonesia and Singapore

Group A

Dec 15 - Jakarta, Indonesia
Indonesia 0
Myanmar 0

Dec 15 - Jakarta, Indonesia
Vietnam 9 (Huynh Hong Son 11, Tran Truong Giang 16, 40, Nguyen Quoc Trung 24, Le Huynh Duc 63, 80, Nguyen Minh Phuong 75, Trinh Xuan Thanh 88, Pham Van Quyen 90)
Cambodia 2 (Hok Sochetra 31, Ung Kanyanith 58)
HT: 4-1
Sent off: Peas Sothy (Cambodia) 39min

Dec 17 - Jakarta, Indonesia
Philippines 1 (Gonzalez 81)
Myanmar 6 (Aung Kyaw Moe 7, 52, Zaw Htaik 35, Soe Lin Tun 44, Zaw Zaw 56, Tint Naing Tun Thein 63)
HT: 0-3

Dec 17 - Jakarta, Indonesia
Cambodia 2 (Hok Sochetra 10, 44)
Indonesia 4 (Arif 35, Bambang 62, 77, pen 83)
HT: 2-1
Sent off: Chanveasna (Cambodia) 83min

Dec 19 - Jakarta, Indonesia
Myanmar 5 (Zaw Zaw 47, Lwin Oo 58, 78, Zaw Htaik 69, Tint Naing Tun Thein 83)
Cambodia 0
HT: 0-0

Dec 19 - Jakarta, Indonesia
Vietnam 4 (Huynh Hong Son 55, 69, Le Huynh Duc pen 67, 74)
Philippines 1 (Canedo 71)
HT: 0-0

Dec 21 - Jakarta, Indonesia
Cambodia 1 (Ung Khanyanith 90)
Philippines 0
HT: 0-0

Dec 21 - Jakarta, Indonesia
Indonesia 2 (Budi 12, Zaenal 83)
Vietnam 2 (Phan Van Tai Em 53, Le Huynh Duc 59)
HT: 1-0
Sent off: Gendut (Indonesia) 80min

Dec 23 - Jakarta, Indonesia
Myanmar 2 (Lwin Oo 30, Htay Aung 80)
Vietnam 4 (Trinh Xuan Thanh 38, Dang Phuong Nam 48, 66, Le Huynh Duc pen 72)
HT: 1-1
Sent off: Trinh Xuan Thanh (Vietnam) 57min; Lwin Oo (Myanmar) 87min

Dec 23 - Jakarta, Indonesia
Philippines 1 (Ali Go 78)
Indonesia 13 (Bambang 1, 29, 35, 82, Zaenal 6, 38, 41, 57, Budi 16, Sugiyantoro 55, 75, Imran 81, Licuanan og 88)
HT: 0-7

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Vietnam	4	3	1	0	19	7	10
Indonesia	4	2	2	0	19	5	8
Myanmar	4	2	1	1	13	5	7
Cambodiia	4	1	0	3	5	18	3
Philippines	4	0	0	4	3	24	0

Group B

Dec 18 - Singapore
Thailand 5 (Worawoot 1, 24, Kiatisuk 8, 83, 90)
Laos 1 (Visay 66)
HT: 3-0

Dec 18 - Singapore
Singapore 0
Malaysia 4 (Akmal 30, Indra 49, 65, Nizaruddin 69)
HT: 0-1

Dec 20 - Singapore
Laos 1 (Visay 19)
Singapore 2 (Shah 6, Noor Ali 52)
HT: 1-1
Sent off: Chuan (Singapore) 55min

Dec 20 - Singapore
Malaysia 3 (Akmal 43, Tengku 66, Indra 86)
Thailand 1 (Therdsak 23)
HT: 1-1
Sent off: Sakda (Thailand) 77min

Dec 22 - Singapore
Malaysia 1 (Nizam Jamil pen 27)
Laos 1 (Visay 29)
HT: 1-1

Dec 22 - Singapore
Singapore 1 (Noor Ali 44)
Thailand 1 (Worawoot 15)
HT: 1-1

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Malaysia	3	2	1	0	8	2	7
Thailand	3	1	1	1	7	5	4
Singapore	3	1	1	1	3	6	4
Laos	3	0	1	2	3	8	1

Semi-finals

Dec 27 - Jakarta, Indonesia
Vietnam 0
Thailand 4 (Worawoot 24, Narongchai 42, Manit 75, Sakda 90)
HT: 0-2

Dec 27 - Jakarta, Indonesia
Malaysia 0
Indonesia 1 (Bambang 75)
HT: 0-0

Third-place play-off

Dec 29 - Jakarta, Indonesia
Vietnam 2 (Tran Truong Giang 45, Nguyen Minh Phuong 59)
Malaysia 1 (Indraputra 55)
HT: 1-0

Final

Dec 29 - Jakarta, Indonesia
Indonesia 2 (Jaris 47, Gendut 79)
Thailand 2 (Chukiat 26, Therdsak 38)
Aet. **HT:** 0-2. **90mins:** 2-2
Sent off: Chukiat (Thailand) 57min
Thailand 4-2 on pens

ARAB CUP

In Kuwait

Group A

Dec 17
Saudi Arabia 2 (Al-Obaidly, Al-Mishaal)
Bahrain 1 (Yousif)
HT: 1-1

Dec 17
Yemen 0
Syria 4
HT: 0-1

Dec 19
Bahrain 2 (Talib, R Al-Doseri)
Syria 0
HT: 0-0

Dec 19
Saudi Arabia 1 (B Al-Dossary)
Lebanon 0
HT: 0-0

Dec 21
Bahrain 3 (Talib 3)
Yemen 1 (Abdulla)
HT: 1-0

Dec 21
Syria 4 (Al-Khateeb, Rafei 3)
Lebanon 1 (Qassas)
HT: 1-0

Dec 24
Lebanon 4
Yemen 2
HT: 1-1

Dec 24
Syria 0
Saudi Arabia 3
HT: 0-1

Dec 26
Lebanon 0
Bahrain 0

Dec 26
Yemen 2
Saudi Arabia 2 (Al-Qahtani 2)

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saudi Arabia	4	3	1	0	8	3	10
Bahrain	4	2	1	1	6	3	7
Syria	4	2	0	2	8	6	6
Lebanon	4	1	1	2	5	7	4
Yemen	4	0	1	3	5	13	1

Group B

Dec 16
Kuwait 1
Morocco U-23 1
HT: 0-1

Dec 16
Palestine 1
Jordan 1
HT: 1-1

Dec 18
Kuwait 1 (Neda 90)
Sudan 0
HT: 0-0

Dec 18
Morocco U-23 1
Jordan 1
HT: 1-0

Dec 20
Jordan 2 (Saleem 17, Abu Zema 78)
Sudan 0
HT: 1-0
Sent off: Mahjoob 65min, Fedha 78min (both Sudan)

Dec 20
Morocco U-23 3 (Armomen 2, Al-Kharrazi)
Palestine 1 (Al-Kurd)
HT: 2-0

Dec 23
Kuwait 1
Jordan 2
HT: 0-0

Dec 23
Sudan 2
Palestine 2
HT: 0-1

Dec 25
Kuwait 3 (Neda 31, B Abdullah 69, 77)
Palestine 3 (Sulaiman, Alam, Al-Jaish)
HT: 1-2

Dec 25
Sudan 1 (Mustafa pen)
Morocco U-23 0
HT: 1-0

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jordan	4	2	2	0	6	3	8
Morocco U-23	4	1	2	1	5	4	5
Kuwait	4	1	2	1	6	6	5
Sudan	4	1	1	2	3	5	4
Palestine	4	0	3	1	7	9	3

Semi-finals

Dec 28
Bahrain 2 (H Ali 2)
Jordan 1 (Al-Zaboon)
HT: 0-1

Dec 28
Saudi Arabia 2 (Al-Wakad, Al-Mishal)
Morocco U-23 0
HT: 1-0

Final

Dec 30 - Kuwait City
Bahrain 0
Saudi Arabia 1 (Noor 93 - golden goal)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0

ASIAN CUP 2004 QUALIFIERS

Draw

Preliminary Round

Group A: Myanmar, Brunei, Maldives.
Group B: Taiwan, East Timor, Sri Lanka.
Group C: Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Nepal.
Group D: Hong Kong, Laos, Bangladesh.
Group E: Pakistan, Singapore, Macao.
Group F: Bhutan, Mongolia, Guam.
Group G: India, North Korea.

Group winners enter qualifying round

Qualifying Round

Group A: Uzbekistan, Thailand, Tajikistan, Winner Preliminary Round Group D.
Group B: Qatar, Kuwait, Palestine, Winner Preliminary Round Group E.
Group C: Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Indonesia, Winner Preliminary Round Group F.
Group D: Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Winner Preliminary Round Group G.
Group E: South Korea, Oman, Vietnam, Winner Preliminary Round Group C.
Group F: Iraq, Bahrain, Malaysia, Winner Preliminary Round Group A.
Group G: United Arab Emirates, Syria, Turkmenistan, Winner Preliminary Round Group B.

Group winners and runners-up qualify for finals

China (hosts) and Japan (holders) qualify automatically for finals

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

2nd group phase

Group A

December 10

Internazionale (Ita) 3 (Di Biagio 15, 27, Butt og 80)
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 2 (Zivkovic 63, Franca 90)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 36,342. **Ref:** Dallas (Sco)
Inter: Toldo - J Zanetti, Cordoba, Gamarra, Pasquale - Almeyda, Emre, Di Biagio (Beati 71) - Recoba - Crespo (Kallon 88), Vieri (Sergio Conceicao 74).
Leverkusen: Butt - Kleine, Ramelow, Juan - Zivkovic, Schneider, Balitsch (Bierofka 78), Basturk (Simac 83), Placente - Neuville, Berbatov (Franca 75).

December 11

Barcelona (Spa) 3 (Dani Garcia 7, Kluivert 35, Motta 58)
Newcastle United (Eng) 1 (Ameobi 24)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 45,100. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
Barcelona: Bonano - Reiziger (Christanval 14), De Boer, Cocu (Mendieta 16) - Puyol, Riquelme, Xavi, Motta - Dani Garcia (Saviola 78), Kluivert, Overmars.
Newcastle: Given - Griffin, O'Brien, Hughes, Bernard - Solano, Dyer, Speed, Robert - Ameobi, Lua Lua (Chopra 84).

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Internazionale	2	2	0	0	7	3	6
Barcelona	2	2	0	0	5	2	6
Bayer Leverkusen	2	0	0	2	3	5	0
Newcastle	2	0	0	2	2	7	0

Tue, February 18
Barcelona v Internazionale
Bayer Leverkusen v Newcastle United

Wed, February 26
Internazionale v Barcelona
Newcastle United v Bayer Leverkusen

Tue, March 11
Barcelona v Bayer Leverkusen
Internazionale v Newcastle United

Wed, March 19
Bayer Leverkusen v Internazionale
Newcastle United v Barcelona

Group B

December 10

Ajax (Hol) 2 (Ibrahimovic 11, Litmanen 66)
Roma (Ita) 1 (Batistuta 89)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 50,148. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
Ajax: Stekelenburg - Trabelsi (Yakubu 33), Pasanen, Bergdolmo, Maxwell - Pienaar, De Jong, Witschge - Van der Meyde (Boukhari 80), Hossam (Litmanen 57), Ibrahimovic.
Roma: Antonioli - Panucci, Dellas (Montella 61), Samuel, Zebina - Cafu, Emerson, Lima, Candela - Totti, Cassano (Batistuta 72).

Arsenal (Eng) 0
Valencia (Spa) 0
Att: 34,793. **Ref:** Milton Nielsen (Den)
Arsenal: Seaman - Lauren, Campbell, Cygan, Cole - Ljungberg (Wiltord 79), Vieira (Parlour 38), Gilberto Silva, Pires (Kanu 83) - Bergkamp, Henry.
Valencia: Palop - Curro Torres, Pellegrino, Ayala, Carboni - Angulo, Albelda, Baraja (Fabio Aurelio 87), Vicente (Rufete 68) - Aimar (Marchena 80) - Carew.
Sent off: Angulo 72min.

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Ajax	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Valencia	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Roma	2	0	0	2	2	5	0

Tue, February 18
Arsenal v Ajax
Roma v Valencia

Wed, February 26
Ajax v Arsenal
Valencia v Roma

Tue, March 11
Ajax v Valencia
Arsenal v Roma

Wed, March 19
Roma v Ajax
Valencia v Arsenal

Group C

December 11

Borussia Dortmund (Ger) 0
Milan (Ita) 1 (Inzaghi 49)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 52,000. **Ref:** Frisk (Swe)
Dortmund: Lehmann - Heinrich (Evanilson 73), Worns, Metzelder, Dede - Kehl (Reina 83), Frings - Rosicky - Ewerthon (Ricken 64), Koller, Amoroso.
Milan: Dida - Simic, Nesta, Maldini, Kaladze - Seedorf, Pirlo, Ambrosini - Rui Costa (Serginho 78) - Inzaghi (Rivaldo 86), Shevchenko (Laursen 90).

Real Madrid (Spa) 2 (Raul 21, 76)
Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 2 (Obiorah 47, Mnguni 74)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 52,000. **Ref:** Barber (Eng)
Real Madrid: Casillas - Michel Salgado, Hierro, Pavon, Roberto Carlos - Makelele (Flavio Conceicao 32), Cambiasso (Morientes 77) - Figo, Raul, Zidane - Ronaldo (Guti 46).
Lokomotiv: Ovchinnikov - Evseev, Nizhegorodov, Ignashevich, Pachinin, Lekgetho - Maminov, Mnguni, Loskov - Julio Cesar (Obiorah 46), Pimenov (Drozdov 81).

GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan	2	2	0	0	2	0	6
B Dortmund	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Lokomotiv M	2	0	1	1	3	4	1
Real Madrid	2	0	1	1	2	3	1

Wed, February 19
Milan v Lokomotiv Moscow
Real Madrid v Borussia Dortmund

Tue, February 25
Borussia Dortmund v Real Madrid
Lokomotiv Moscow v Milan

Wed, March 12
Borussia Dortmund v Lokomotiv Moscow
Real Madrid v Milan

Tue, March 18
Lokomotiv Moscow v Real Madrid
Milan v Borussia Dortmund

Group D

December 11

Juventus (Ita) 4 (Trezeguet 3, Montero 34, Tacchinardi 43, Del Piero pen 51)
Basle (Swi) 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 22,639. **Ref:** Cortez Batista (Por)

Juventus: Buffon - Thuram (Ferrara 59), Iuliano, Montero, Birindelli - Zambrotta, Tacchinardi, Davids - Nedved - Trezeguet (Zalayeta 64), Del Piero (Conte 72).
Basle: Zuberbuhler - Barberis, M Yakin, Zwyssig, Atouba - Esposito, Cantaluppi, Chipperfield (Duruz 65) - H Yakin (Tum 77) - Rossi, Gimenez (Varela 46).

Manchester United (Eng) 2 (Van Nistelrooy 7, 55)
Deportivo La Coruna (Spa) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 67,014. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
Man Utd: Barthez - G Neville, Brown, Silvestre, O'Shea (Beckham 81) - Solskjaer, P Neville (Forlan 81), Veron, Giggs - Scholes, Van Nistelrooy (Richardson 89).
Deportivo: Juanmi - Scaloni, Romero, Cesar, Capdevila - Mauro Silva - Victor (Luque 75), Sergio, Valeron (Acuna 65), Amavisca (Diego Tristan 46) - Makaay.

GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Manchester Utd	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Juventus	2	1	1	0	6	2	4
Dep La Coruna	2	0	1	1	2	4	1
Basle	2	0	0	2	1	7	0

Wed, February 19
Basle v Deportivo La Coruna
Manchester United v Juventus

Tue, February 25
Deportivo La Coruna v Basle
Juventus v Manchester United

Wed, March 12
Juventus v Deportivo La Coruna
Manchester United v Basle

Tue, March 18
Basle v Juventus
Deportivo La Coruna v Manchester United

UEFA CUP

3rd rnd, 2nd legs

December 10

Schalke (Ger) 1 (Hajto 42)
Wisla Krakow (Pol) 4 (Zurawski 40, 85, Uche 51, Kosowski 89)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Ovrebo (Nor)
Wisla 5-2 on agg

December 12

Anderlecht (Blg) 2 (Dindane 28, Jestrovic 68)
Bordeaux (Fra) 2 (Darcheville 82, 90)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Benes (Cze)
Anderlecht 4-2 on agg

Auxerre (Fra) 2 (Tainio 19, Lachuer 48)
Real Betis (Spa) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Dougal (Sco)
Auxerre 2-1 on agg

Boavista (Por) 1 (E Silva pen 56)
Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Siric (Cro)
Sent off: Luiz Claudio (Boavista) 87min
Agg 2-2. Boavista on away goals

Celta Vigo (Spa) 2 (Jesuli 23, McCarthy 54)
Celtic (Sco) 1 (Hartson 37)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Larsen (Den)
Agg 2-2. Celtic on away goals

Fulham (Eng) 0
Hertha Berlin (Ger) 0
Ref: Collina (Ita)
Hertha 2-1 on agg

Kyiv Dynamo (Ukr) 0
Besiktas (Tur) 0
Ref: Bolognino (Ita)
Besiktas 3-1 on agg

Lazio (Ita) 0
Sturm Graz (Aut) 1 (Szabics 87)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Allaerts (Blg)
Lazio 3-2 on agg

Leeds United (Eng) 1 (Bakke 22)
Malaga (Spa) 2 (Dely Valdes 13, 79)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Busacca (Swi)
Malaga 2-1 on agg

Lens (Fra) 1 (Song 28)
FC Porto (Por) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Hrinak (Slk)
Porto 3-1 on agg

Liverpool (Eng) 1 (Owen 21)
Vitesse Arnhem (Hol) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
Liverpool 2-0 on agg

Lyon (Fra) 0
Denizlispor (Tur) 1 (Mustafa 6)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Irvine (NI)
Denizlispor 1-0 on agg

Maccabi Haifa (Isr) 1 (Badir pen 5)
AEK Athens (Gre) 4 (Katsouranis 56, Lakis 80, 90, Nalitzis 90)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Fisker (Den)
Played in Nicosia, Cyprus
AEK 8-1 on agg

Panathinaikos (Gre) 1 (Fissas 2)
Slovan Liberec (Cze) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Poulat (Fra)
Panathinaikos 3-2 on agg

Slavia Prague (Cze) 4 (Skacel 13, Vachousek 51, Kuka 89, 90)
PAOK Salonika (Gre) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Lopez Nieto (Spa)
Slavia 4-1 on agg

Stuttgart (Ger) 1 (Hleb 90)
Club Brugge (Blg) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Dauden Ibanez (Spa)
Stuttgart 3-1 on agg

4th rnd draw

Auxerre v Liverpool
Celtic v Stuttgart
Hertha Berlin v Boavista
Lazio v Wisla Krakow
Malaga v AEK Athens
Panathinaikos v Anderlecht
FC Porto v Denizlispor
Slavia Prague v Besiktas

1st legs, February 20; 2nd legs, February 27

Quarter-finals draw

Celtic/Stuttgart v Auxerre/Liverpool
Malaga/AEK Athens v Hertha Berlin/Boavista
FC Porto/Denizlispor v Panathinaikos/Anderlecht
Slavia Prague/Besiktas v Lazio/Wisla Krakow

1st legs, March 13; 2nd legs, March 20

ARMENIA

ARMENIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pyunik Yerevan	22	19	2	1	85	14	59
Shirak Gyumri	22	16	3	3	49	15	51
Banants	22	16	2	4	43	15	50
Spartak Yerevan	22	15	4	3	58	16	49
Ararat Yerevan	22	9	6	7	39	22	33
Mika Ashtarak	22	9	6	7	35	28	33
Zvartnots	22	10	2	10	57	29	32
Lernagorts	22	6	5	11	21	43	23
Lernayin Artsakh*	22	5	2	15	21	52	17
Dinamo Yerevan	22	3	3	16	19	63	12
Kotaik Abovian	22	2	5	15	17	62	11
Lori Vanadzor	22	1	2	19	15	100	5

**Formerly Gharabagh*

AUSTRIA

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Austria Wien	21	14	4	3	43	14	46
Pasching	21	9	6	6	29	22	33
Sturm Graz	21	10	3	8	31	33	33
SV Ried	21	8	6	7	30	24	30
Rapid Wien	21	8	6	7	30	25	30
Grazer AK	21	6	8	7	24	26	26
Salzburg	21	6	6	9	24	35	24
Karnten	21	6	5	10	25	32	23
Bregenz	21	4	9	8	29	35	21
Admira	21	4	7	10	19	38	19

BELGIUM

Saturday, December 7

Charleroi 1 (Dufer 48)
La Louviere 1 (Magro 66) Att: 13,522

Club Brugge 2 (De Cock 63, Clement 75)
Anderlecht 1 (Crasson 45) Att: 26,305

Mouscron 0
Beveren 0 Att: 5,500

Royal Antwerp 1 (Gomez 3)
Westerlo 2 (Lammens 1, De Langhe 88) Att: 5,500

Sunday, December 8

Genk 1 (Beslija 83)
Standard 5 (Arst 20, Lukunku 26, 39, Da Silva Moreira 38, Walasiak 56) Att: 24,133

Gent 2 (Kaklamanos 41, 43)
Mechelen 0 Att: 6,500

Lierse 0
St Truiden 2 (Jacquemijn 2, Pereira 61) Att: 7,000

Mons 2 (Rivenet 2, Roussel 12)
Germinal Beerschot 1 (Kpaka 51) Att: 4,500

Friday, December 13

Lommel 0
Mons 1 (Rivenet 63) Att: 2,500

St Truiden 0
Genk 1 (Sonck 76) Att: 12,500

Saturday, December 14

Lokeren 1 (Gretarsson 90)
Lierse 1 (Huysegems 31) Att: 6,000

Mechelen 0
Royal Antwerp 2 (Goots 8, Kubik 90) Att: 7,000

Sunday, December 15

Beveren 3 (Zezeto 20, Boka 84, Sanogo 90)
Charleroi 0 Att: 4,000

Germinal Beerschot 1 (Kpaka 62)
Club Brugge 3 (Verheyen 1, Ceh 59, Serebrennikov 76) Att: 10,000

La Louviere 1 (Magro 42)
Anderlecht 2 (Baseggio 70, Dindane 75) Att: 8,000

Standard 4 (Walem 25, Lukunku 53, 66, Walasiak 70)
Gent 1 (Kaklamanos 16) Att: 14,300

Westerlo 1 (Brogno pen 58)
Mouscron 2 (Zewlakow 13, Dugardein 88) Att: 4,000

Saturday, December 21

Anderlecht 7 (Seol 28, Baseggio 30, Jestrovic 45, 77, 78, De Boeck 80, Mornar 89)
Beveren 1 (Wostijn 57) Att: 23,500

Charleroi 1 (Yazdani 53)
Westerlo 0 Att: 7,377

Club Brugge 3 (Martens 9, Clement 46, Simons 63)
Lommel 0 Att: 18,855

Gent 2 (Hosny 53, 64)
Genk 0 Att: 10,000

Lierse 2 (Kone 55, 63)
Germinal Beerschot 1 (Haagdoren 84) Att: 7,000

Mons 1 (Ciobotariu 19)
La Louviere 3 (Ernst 17, Tilmant 45, Haydock 70) Att: 8,500

Mouscron 3 (Dugardein 8, 42, Sishuba 90)
Mechelen 1 (Viscaal 78) Att: 7,000

St Truiden 2 (Mitrovic 18, Buvens 61)
Lokeren 0 Att: 9,000

Sunday, December 22

Royal Antwerp 1 (Mussa 85)
Standard 1 (Walasiak 12) Att: 7,500

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge	17	15	1	1	48	14	46
Anderlecht	17	11	2	4	41	22	35
St Truiden	17	10	4	3	45	24	34
Lierse	17	9	5	3	28	17	32
Lokeren	17	9	4	4	33	26	31
Genk	17	8	5	4	39	26	29
Mons	17	8	2	7	27	22	26
Mouscron	17	7	5	5	31	31	26
Standard	17	6	5	6	29	25	23
Gent	17	7	2	8	26	28	23
Royal Antwerp	17	6	4	7	27	30	22
La Louviere	17	5	5	7	20	18	20
Germinal B	17	5	2	10	31	36	17
Beveren	17	5	2	10	19	37	17
Westerlo	17	5	1	11	13	32	16
Lommel	17	3	3	11	14	30	12
Mechelen	17	2	4	11	15	43	10
Charleroi	17	1	6	10	17	42	9

LEADING GOALSCORERS
15 Wesley Sonck (Genk)
11 Patrick Goots (Royal Antwerp)
11 Stein Huysegems (Lierse)
11 Alexandros Kaklamanos (Gent)

BELGIAN CUP – last 16

Dec 17: Royal Antwerp 2 Mons 0.
Dec 18: Anderlecht 2 Turnhout 1; Club Brugge 6 Bocholter 1; Genk 1 La Louviere 1 (aet; La Louviere 4-3 on pens); Germinal Beerschot 2 Westerlo 0; Lommel 2 Mouscron 1; Standard 2 Charleroi 1; St Truiden 0 Lierse 0 (aet; St Truiden 4-3 on pens).

BULGARIA

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA	13	13	0	0	35	5	39
Levski	13	10	1	2	31	12	31
Lovech	13	8	3	2	22	6	27
Lok Plovdiv	13	8	2	3	30	16	26
Slavia	13	8	1	4	30	16	25
Cherno More	13	6	3	4	15	11	21
Naftex	13	7	0	6	17	18	21
Marek	13	5	1	7	17	19	16
Chernomorets	13	5	1	7	18	21	16
Spartak Varna	13	4	2	7	13	19	14
Lok Sofia	13	3	3	7	10	17	12
Botev	13	3	1	9	17	34	10
Rilski Sportist	13	0	3	10	8	28	3
Dobrudzha	13	0	1	12	7	48	1

CROATIA

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	17	13	3	1	40	14	42
Hajduk	17	12	2	3	30	12	38
Varteks	17	12	0	5	31	16	36
Cibalia	17	8	4	5	23	20	28
Kamen Ingrad	17	6	8	3	17	17	26
Slaven	17	8	1	8	22	21	25
Zagreb	17	6	5	6	22	23	23
Zadar	17	3	6	8	15	29	15
Rijeka	17	4	2	11	19	25	14
Osijek	17	3	5	9	18	36	14
Sibenik	17	2	5	10	19	30	11
Pomorac	17	1	7	9	20	33	10

CZECH REPUBLIC

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sparta	15	11	3	1	26	5	36
Slavia	15	9	5	1	29	9	32
Teplice	15	9	1	5	22	18	28
Liberec	15	8	2	5	24	18	26
Ostrava	15	7	3	5	23	16	24
Zizkov	15	7	3	5	21	21	24
Synot	15	6	4	5	18	18	22
Pribram	15	5	4	6	14	14	19
Ceske Budejovice	15	6	1	8	20	27	19
Brno	15	5	3	7	17	18	18
Chmel Blsany	15	5	3	7	13	17	18
Jablonec	15	4	6	5	16	23	18
Zlin	15	4	4	7	15	23	16
Olomouc	15	2	5	8	12	18	11
Hradec Kralove	15	1	8	6	13	23	11
Bohemians	15	2	3	10	19	34	9

DENMARK

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Copenhagen	18	11	5	2	30	16	38
Brondby	18	8	5	5	36	20	29
Farum	18	9	0	9	26	35	27
AaB	18	8	2	8	25	27	26
Esbjerg	18	6	7	5	37	36	25
Midtjylland	18	6	6	6	26	23	24
AB	18	5	8	5	23	20	23
OB	18	6	5	7	28	26	23
AGF	18	6	4	8	26	33	22
Koge	18	7	1	10	30	40	22
Viborg	18	5	6	7	31	35	21
Silkeborg	18	4	5	9	23	30	17

ENGLAND

Saturday, December 7

Aston Villa 0
Newcastle 1 (Shearer 82) Att: 34,446

Bolton 1 (Okocha 9)
Blackburn 1 (Short 90) Att: 24,556

Charlton 2 (Euell 36, Konchesky 78)
Liverpool 0 Att: 26,694

Everton 1 (Naysmith 43)
Chelsea 3 (Stanic 5, Hasselbaink 28, Gronkjaer 90) Att: 39,396

Fulham 1 (Djetou 10)
Leeds 0 Att: 17,494

Manchester Utd 2 (Veron 22, Scholes 73)
Arsenal 0 Att: 67,650

Middlesbrough 2 (Nemeth 58, Ehiogu 88)
West Ham 2 (Cole 46, Pearce 77) Att: 28,283

Southampton 2 (Beattie pen 60, 83)
Birmingham 0 Att: 31,132

Sunday, December 8

Tottenham 3 (Ziege 3, Keane 30, Poyet 80)
West Brom 1 (Dobie 73) Att: 35,958

Monday, December 9

Sunderland 0
Manchester City 3 (Foe 44, Sun 62, Goater 87) Att: 36,511

Saturday, December 14

Aston Villa 2 (Vassell 16, Hitzlsperger 90)
West Brom 1 (Koumas 29) Att: 40,391

Charlton 2 (Euell pen 51, Jensen 63)
Manchester City 2 (Foe 73, 87) Att: 26,434

Everton 2 (Carsley 12, Rooney 25)
Blackburn 1 (Cole 6) Att: 36,578

Manchester Utd 3 (Solskjaer 15, Veron 17, Schemmel og 61)
West Ham 0 Att: 67,555

Middlesbrough 1 (Geremi 32)
Chelsea 1 (Terry 42) Att: 29,160

Southampton 1 (Marsden 52)
Newcastle 1 (Bellamy 50) Att: 32,061

Sunday, December 15

Fulham 0
Birmingham 1 (Kirovski 7) Att: 14,962

Sunderland 2 (McCann 36, Proctor 85)
Liverpool 1 (Baros 68) Att: 37,118

Tottenham 1 (Ziege 11)
Arsenal 1 (Pires pen 45) Att: 36,076

Monday, December 16

Bolton 0
Leeds 3 (Mills 12, Fowler 16, Wilcox 75) Att: 23,378

Saturday, December 21

Arsenal 2 (Campbell 45, Pires 90)
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 38,003

Birmingham 1 (Devlin pen 67)
Charlton 1 (Jensen 37) Att: 28,837

Chelsea 2 (Gudjohnsen 42, Lampard 57)
Aston Villa 0 Att: 38,284

Leeds 1 (Kewell 74)
Southampton 1 (Fernandes 89) Att: 36,687

Newcastle 2 (Solano 8, Bellamy 70)
Fulham 0 Att: 51,576

West Brom 2 (Dichio 27, Koumas 33)
Sunderland 2 (Phillips 56, 64) Att: 26,703

West Ham 1 (Pearce 17)
Bolton 1 (Ricketts 65) Att: 34,892

Sunday, December 22

Blackburn 1 (Flitcroft 40)
Manchester Utd 0 Att: 30,475

Liverpool 0
Everton 0 Att: 44,025

Monday, December 23

Manchester City 2 (Howey 29, Benarbia 90)
Tottenham 3 (Perry 38, Davies 48, Poyet 84) Att: 34,563

Thursday, December 26

Birmingham 1 (Kirovski 45)
Everton 1 (Radzinski 45) Att: 29,505

Bolton 4 (Okocha 5, Gardner 9, Ricketts 45, 63)
Newcastle 3 (Shearer 8, 79, Ameobi 71) Att: 27,314

Chelsea 0
Southampton 0 Att: 39,428

Liverpool 1 (Riise 17)
Blackburn 1 (Cole 77) Att: 43,075

Manchester City 3 (Foe 15, 80, Benarbia 78)
Aston Villa 1 (Dublin 41) Att: 33,991

Middlesbrough 3 (Boksic 44, Nemeth 48, Job 85)
Manchester Utd 1 (Giggs 60) Att: 34,673

Sunderland 1 (Proctor 34)
Leeds 2 (Milner 51, Fowler pen 80) Att: 44,029

Tottenham 2 (Keane 68, Iversen 87)
Charlton 2 (Euell 14, 49) Att: 36,043

West Brom 1 (Dichio 3)
Arsenal 2 (Jeffers 48, Henry 85) Att: 27,025

West Ham 1 (Sinclair pen 65)
Fulham 1 (Sava 49) Att: 35,025

Saturday, December 28

Aston Villa 1 (Dublin 11)
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 33,637

Blackburn 2 (Duff 4, Cole 78)
West Ham 2 (Taylor og 24, Defoe 86) Att: 24,998

Charlton 1 (Lisbie 6)
West Brom 0 Att: 26,196

Everton 0
Bolton 0 Att: 39,480

Fulham 0
Manchester City 1 (Anelka 84) Att: 17,937

Leeds 2 (Woodgate 30, Milner 45)
Chelsea 0 Att: 40,122

Manchester Utd 2 (Forlan 37, Beckham 73)
Birmingham 0 Att: 67,640

Southampton 2 (Beattie 73, Tessem 90)
Sunderland 1 (Flo 77) Att: 31,423

Sunday, December 29

Arsenal 1 (Henry pen 79)
Liverpool 1 (Murphy pen 70) Att: 38,074

Newcastle 2 (Speed 17, Shearer 58)
Tottenham 1 (Dabizas og 73) Att: 52,145

Wednesday, January 1

Arsenal 3 (Desailly og 9, Van Bronckhorst 81, Henry 82)
Chelsea 2 (Stanic 85, Petit 86) Att: 38,096

Aston Villa 2 (Dublin 8, Vassell 80)
Bolton 0 Att: 31,838

Blackburn 1 (Yorke 57)
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 23,413

Everton 2 (Watson 6, Radzinski 90)
Manchester City 2 (Anelka 33, Foe 82) Att: 40,163

Leeds 2 (Bakke 6, Viduka 67)
Birmingham 0 Att: 40,034

Manchester Utd 2 (Beckham 81, Scholes 90)
Sunderland 1 (Veron og 5) Att: 67,609

Newcastle 1 (Robert 13)
Liverpool 0 Att: 52,147

Southampton 1 (Beattie 82)
Tottenham 0 Att: 31,890

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	22	14	4	4	45	24	46
Man Utd	22	12	5	5	35	22	41
Chelsea	22	10	8	4	36	20	38
Newcastle	21	12	2	7	35	29	38
Everton	22	10	6	6	25	24	36
Southampton	22	9	8	5	25	20	35
Liverpool	22	9	7	6	30	22	34
Blackburn	22	8	8	6	29	25	32
Tottenham	22	9	5	8	30	31	32
Man City	22	9	4	9	30	31	31
Leeds	22	9	3	10	30	27	30
Middlesbrough	22	8	5	9	25	21	29
Charlton	21	8	5	8	24	25	29
Aston Villa	22	8	4	10	21	23	28
Birmingham	22	6	7	9	19	27	25
Fulham	21	6	5	10	23	27	23
Bolton	21	4	7	10	23	37	19
Sunderland	22	4	6	12	15	32	18
West Brom	21	4	4	13	16	32	16
West Ham	21	3	7	11	21	38	16

LEADING GOALSCORERS
13 James Beattie (Southampton)
13 Alan Shearer (Newcastle)
12 Thierry Henry (Arsenal)
10 Nicolas Anelka (Manchester City)
9 Gianfranco Zola (Chelsea)

FA CUP – 3rd rnd (last 64)

Jan 4: Arsenal 2 Oxford 0; Aston Villa 1 Blackburn 4; Blackpool 1 Crystal Palace 2; Bolton 1 Sunderland 1; Bournemouth 0 Crewe 0; Brentford 1 Derby 0; Cambridge Utd 1 Millwall 1; Cardiff 2 Coventry 2; Charlton 3 Exeter 1; Chelsea 1 Middlesbrough 0; Darlington 2 Farnborough 3; Grimsby 2 Burnley 2; Ipswich 4 Morecambe 0; Leicester 2 Bristol City 0; Macclesfield 0 Watford 2; Manchester Utd 4 Portsmouth 1; Plymouth 2 Dagenham & Redbridge 2; Preston 1 Rochdale 2; Rotherham 0 Wimbledon 3; Scunthorpe 0 Leeds 2; Sheffield Utd 4 Cheltenham 0; Shrewsbury 2 Everton 1; Southampton 4 Tottenham 0; Stoke 3 Wigan 0; Walsall 0 Reading 0; West Brom 3 Bradford City 1; West Ham 3 Nottingham Forest 2.
Jan 5: Fulham 3 Birmingham 1; Manchester City 0 Liverpool 1; Wolverhampton 3 Newcastle 2.
Jan 7: Gillingham 4 Sheffield Wed 1.

Still to play: Norwich v Brighton.

FRANCE

Saturday, December 14

Sedan 1 (H Camara 70)
Marseille 2 (Dos Santos 39, Bakayoko 49) Att: 22,800

Sochaux 2 (Pagis 16, Frau 28)
Bastia 0 Att: 10,934

Sunday, December 15

Ajaccio 2 (Seck 45, Rodriguez 85)
Lille 2 (Manchev 23, Landrin 36) Att: 3,500

Auxerre 0
Strasbourg 0 Att: 5,500

Bordeaux 4 (Savio 27, 43, Pauleta 59, Eduardo Costa 90)
Nice 0 Att: 28,000

Lens 1 (Utaka 37)
Le Havre 0 Att: 34,867

Lyon 1 (Carriere 56)
Montpellier 1 (Cisse 90) Att: 30,059

Monaco 4 (Nonda pen 40, Rothen 53, 69, Prso 78)
Guingamp 0 Att: 3,500

Nantes 2 (Pujol 12, Gillet 14)
Troyes 1 (Saifi 33) Att: 32,000

Rennes 1 (Arribage 71)
Paris SG 0 Att: 22,503

Thursday, December 19

Paris SG 1 (Fiorese 13)
Bordeaux 1 (Feindouno 39) Att: 39,465

Friday, December 20

Bastia 3 (Batiles 34, Essien 73, Laslandes 85)
Nantes 1 (Vahirua 64) Att: 7,706

Guingamp 3 (Bardon pen 31, Drogba 34, 36)
Ajaccio 1 (Bezzaz 24) Att: 16,336

Lille 1 (Delpierre 85)
Le Havre 0 Att: 13,525

Marseille 1 (Van Buyten 60)
Monaco 1 (Prso 40) Att: 51,426

Sedan 1 (H Camara 88)
Lyon 1 (Anderson 47) Att: 13,870

Sochaux 3 (Santos 59, 74, Frau 80)
Lens 0 Att: 12,682

Strasbourg 0
Nice 0 Att: 12,986

Troyes 0
Rennes 1 (Piquionne 89) Att: 10,122

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Marseille	20	10	5	5	21	19	35
Nice	20	9	7	4	24	14	34
Guingamp	20	10	4	6	31	24	34
Monaco	20	9	6	5	32	20	33
Lyon	20	9	6	5	36	25	33
Sochaux	20	9	6	5	23	14	33
Auxerre	18	8	5	5	19	17	29
Paris SG	20	7	7	6	29	21	28
Nantes	20	8	4	8	23	24	28
Lens	20	7	7	6	18	19	28
Lille	20	7	7	6	20	24	28
Bordeaux	20	7	6	7	23	19	27
Strasbourg	20	7	6	7	23	30	27
Bastia	20	7	3	10	21	28	24
Sedan	19	6	5	8	22	25	23
Rennes	20	6	5	9	19	22	23
Le Havre	20	4	7	9	14	24	19
Ajaccio	20	4	6	10	16	27	18
Troyes	20	3	7	10	14	22	16
Montpellier	19	3	7	9	16	26	16

LEADING GOALSCORERS
11 Shabani Nonda (Monaco)
10 Pauleta (Bordeaux)
8 Sonny Anderson (Lyon)
8 Kaba Diawara (Nice)
8 Didier Drogba (Guingamp)

FRENCH CUP – last 64

Jan 4: Amiens 5 Montpellier 3 (aet); Anglet 0 Guingamp 1; Caen 1 Auxerre 2; Carquefou 1 Le Mans 4 (aet); Forbach 2 Lens 3; Grenoble 2 Sochaux 1; La Vitreenne 1 Dijon 2; Libourne-St-Seurin 1 Lyon 0; Marseille 2 Bastia 0; Montelimar 0 Lorient 3; Nancy 1 Niort 0 (aet); Nice 0 Metz 0 (aet; Metz 4-2 on pens); Quimper 0 Lille 3; Toulouse 3 Viry-Chatillon 1; Valenciennes 2 Le Havre 3; Villeurbanne Algerienne 0 Agde 3; AS Vitre 1 Ajaccio 3; Wasquehal 3 Monaco 2 (aet).
Jan 5: Amneville 2 Raon-l'Etape 1; Armentieres 0 Bordeaux 3; Besancon 0 Paris SG 1 (aet); Bourg-Peronnas 1 Strasbourg 0; Change 0 Beauvais 4; Martigues 0 Sedan 0 (aet; Martigues 3-1 on pens); Maubeuge 1 Lambres-lez-Douai 2; Quevilly 6 La Rochelle 1; Schiltigheim 3 Troyes 1; Sete 1 Rennes 4; Seyssinet-Pariset 1 Nimes 0; Vitrolles 1 Laval 1 (aet; Laval 5-3 on pens).
Jan 11: Reims 0 Nantes 2; Tours 0 Angouleme 0 (aet; Angouleme 4-2 on pens).

GERMANY

Saturday, December 7

Arminia Bielefeld 3 (Wichniarek 45, 55, Reinhardt 80)
Hansa Rostock 0 Att: 19,109

Borussia Dortmund 3 (Klos og 22, Amoroso 73, 78)
Kaiserslautern 1 (Dominguez 24) Att: 68,000

Hertha 2 (Simunic 25, Goor 47)
Wolfsburg 2 (Ponte 63, K Madsen 90) Att: 33,163

1860 Munich 0
Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Bierofka 9, Berbatov 51, Neuville 89) Att: 20,000

Nurnberg 2 (Nikl 42, Petkovic pen 52)
Energie Cottbus 2 (Kaluzny 15, Jungnickel 86) Att: 17,600

Schalke 1 (Sand 7)
Werder Bremen 1 (Daun 4) Att: 60,600

Stuttgart 0
Bayern Munich 3 (Zickler 29, Santa Cruz 33, 68) Att: 53,700

Sunday, December 8

Hamburg 1 (Barbarez 56)
Bochum 1 (Graulund 90) Att: 39,028

Monchengladbach 1 (Demo 15)
Hannover 0 Att: 24,500

Saturday, December 14

Bayer Leverkusen 0
Nurnberg 2 (Ciric 58, Junior 88) Att: 22,500

Bayern Munich 0
Schalke 0 Att: 51,000

Bochum 1 (Christiansen 76)
1860 Munich 1 (Lauth 14) Att: 18,229

Energie Cottbus 0
Borussia Dortmund 4 (Koller 8, 90, Ewerthon 47, Amoroso 83) Att: 13,195

Hannover 0
Arminia Bielefeld 0 Att: 27,962

Hansa Rostock 0
Hamburg 0 Att: 21,400

Werder Bremen 2 (Daun 14, Ailton 58)
Monchengladbach 0 Att: 32,188

Sunday, December 15

Kaiserslautern 2 (Lokvenc 28, H Koch pen 87)
Hertha 1 (Dardai 64) Att: 34,142

Wolfsburg 1 (Maric pen 76)
Stuttgart 2 (Schneider 36, Fernando Meira 56) Att: 20,000

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern Munich	17	12	3	2	36	14	39
B Dortmund	17	9	6	2	28	13	33
Werder Bremen	17	10	3	4	34	27	33
Schalke	17	7	7	3	21	14	28
Stuttgart	17	7	6	4	27	22	27
1860 Munich	17	7	4	6	25	24	25
Hamburg	17	7	4	6	21	23	25
Bochum	17	6	5	6	31	28	23
Hertha	17	6	5	6	19	19	23
Wolfsburg	17	7	2	8	20	22	23
Arminia Bielefeld	17	6	4	7	21	24	22
Nurnberg	17	6	3	8	23	27	21
Hansa Rostock	17	5	5	7	20	20	20
B Leverkusen	17	5	5	7	24	27	20
M'gladbach	17	5	4	8	20	19	19
Hannover	17	4	4	9	22	33	16
Kaiserslautern	17	3	4	10	17	28	13
Energie Cottbus	17	2	4	11	13	38	10

LEADING GOALSCORERS
13 Ailton (Werder Bremen)
11 Thomas Christiansen (Bochum)
10 Sasa Ciric (Nurnberg)
10 Giovane Elber (Bayern Munich)

GERMAN CUP – last 16

Dec 3: Bayer Leverkusen 2 Waldhof Mannheim 1; Hamburg 0 Bochum 1; 1860 Munich 2 Rot-Weiss Oberhausen 1; Unterhaching 3 Hansa Rostock 2.
Dec 4: Bayern Munich 0 Schalke 0 (aet; Bayern 5-4 on pens); Kaiserslautern 2 Freiburg 0; LR Ahlen 1 Werder Bremen 2; Nurnberg 0 Koln 2.

GREECE

Dec 7: Akratitos 0 Aris 2.
Dec 8: Panathinaikos 2 Iraklis 0; Proodeftiki 1 AEK 1; Giannina 1 Xanthi 1; PAOK 3 Ionikos 0; Aigaleo 0 Kallithea 0; Panionios 0 OFI 0; Olympiakos 7 Panahaiki 0.
Dec 14: OFI 2 Aigaleo 2.
Dec 15: Aris 2 PAOK 0; Xanthi 0 Panathinaikos 0; Ionikos 0 Proodeftiki 1; Kallithea 2 Giannina 2; Panahaiki 2 Akratitos 0; Olympiakos 3 Panionios 0.
Dec 16: Iraklis 0 AEK 2.
Dec 21: Proodeftiki 3 Aris 1.
Dec 22: Xanthi 1 Iraklis 0; AEK 3 Ionikos 0; Panathinaikos 1 Kallithea 0; Giannina 0 OFI 0; PAOK 4 Panahaiki 0; Aigaleo 0 Olympiakos 2; Akratitos 0 Panionios 3.
Jan 4: Panionios 2 PAOK 0; Akratitos 0 Aigaleo 1.
Jan 5: Iraklis 3 Ionikos 2; Kallithea 0 Xanthi 1; Panahaiki 1 Proodeftiki 1; Olympiakos 2 Giannina 1; Aris 1 AEK 1; OFI 0 Panathinaikos 2.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	13	8	5	0	30	5	29
Panathinaikos	13	8	2	3	15	8	26
PAOK	13	7	3	3	30	18	24
Xanthi	13	5	7	1	16	6	22
AEK	13	6	4	3	20	13	22
Aris	13	6	4	3	16	13	22
Proodeftiki	13	5	6	2	16	11	21
Panionios	13	6	3	4	15	10	21
Iraklis	13	6	3	4	16	13	21
Aigaleo	13	3	7	3	10	13	16
OFI	13	2	6	5	11	15	12
Kallithea	13	2	5	6	10	15	11
Ionikos	13	2	4	7	8	23	10
Giannina	13	1	5	7	11	18	8
Akratitos	13	2	2	9	9	26	8
Panahaiki	13	1	2	10	5	31	5

HOLLAND

Friday, December 6

RBC 1 (Vos 44)
Excelsior 1 (Boutahar 66) Att: 4,750

Saturday, December 7

De Graafschap 1 (Zafarin 47)
Ajax 1 (Hossam 17) Att: 11,000

Heerenveen 3 (Vayrynen 63, Denneboom 69, Nurmela 88)
Feyenoord 1 (Buffel 57) Att: 14,400

Willem II 3 (Quinn 21, Landzaat pen 48, Shoukov 80)
AZ 1 (Meerdink 69) Att: 12,700

Sunday, December 8

NEC 2 (Hristov 30, Wisgerhof 60)
Vitesse 0 Att: 12,250

RKC 2 (Petrovic 32, Janssen 60)
Roda JC 1 (Jongen 73) Att: 6,000

Twente 0
Groningen 0 Att: 13,100

Utrecht 1 (Van den Bergh 45)
PSV 3 (Kezman 2, 66, Ooijer 5) Att: 18,500

Friday, December 13

Groningen 3 (Van Gessel 40, Hugo 63, Matthijs 75)
Roda JC 2 (Cristiano 16, Vicelich 25) Att: 11,600

Saturday, December 14

De Graafschap 1 (Zafarin 75)
Willem II 1 (Van der Gun 1) Att: 10,400

Excelsior 2 (Boutahar 27, Olfers 90)
Twente 2 (Cairo 7, Cavens 85) Att: 2,794

NAC 1 (Engelaar 26)
RKC 0 Att: 13,885

Zwolle 0
NEC 0 Att: 6,100

Sunday, December 15

Ajax 2 (Ibrahimovic 27, Van der Meyde 55)
PSV 4 (Robben 14, Kezman 48, Vennegoor of Hesselink 56, 78) Att: 49,871

Feyenoord 6 (Ono 2, 85, Van Hooijdonk 17, 62, Pardo 27, Bombarda 89)
AZ 1 (Perez 69) Att: 42,000

Heerenveen 2 (De Jong 41, Denneboom 60)
Utrecht 2 (Kuijt 54, pen 58) Att: 14,400

Tuesday, December 17

NEC 3 (Hersi 57, 66, Zonneveld 67)
RBC 0 Att: 10,000

Wednesday, December 18

Heerenveen 2 (Denneboom 6, Samaras 85)
Zwolle 0 Att: 14,200

Vitesse 1 (Claessens 17)
Excelsior 2 (Pinas 28, Boutahar 42) Att: 21,000

Friday, December 20

Roda JC 1 (Sonko 39)
Utrecht 0 Att: 12,500

Twente 3 (Cavens 21, Houwing 71, John 75)
RBC 0 Att: 13,200

Saturday, December 21

De Graafschap 3 (Smit 7, Van de Haar pen 78, Bakens 88)
Zwolle 2 (Bosschaart 18, Van der Haar 51) Att: 10,900

NEC 0
RKC 0 Att: 10,000

PSV 1 (Bouma 42)
Vitesse 0 Att: 33,500

Willem II 1 (Landzaat 48)
Groningen 0 Att: 12,850

Sunday, December 22

Excelsior 0
Ajax 2 (Ibrahimovic 2, Pasanen 51) Att: 3,687

NAC 1 (Feher 86)
Feyenoord 1 (Pardo 6) Att: 15,340

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	17	13	3	1	42	10	42
Ajax	17	12	4	1	44	18	40
Feyenoord	17	10	3	4	40	20	33
NAC	16	6	8	2	22	12	26
Roda JC	17	7	5	5	30	25	26
Willem II	17	7	4	6	26	23	25
RKC	17	7	4	6	18	23	25
Utrecht	17	6	6	5	23	21	24
NEC	17	6	5	6	22	26	23
Twente	17	5	7	5	21	24	22
Heerenveen	17	5	5	7	24	29	20
AZ	16	6	2	8	27	40	20
Excelsior	17	4	6	7	20	29	18
Vitesse	17	4	4	9	17	20	16
RBC	17	4	4	9	20	29	16
Groningen	17	3	4	10	16	28	13
Zwolle	17	3	4	10	16	30	13
De Graafschap	17	3	4	10	18	39	13

LEADING GOALSCORERS
18 Mateja Kezman (PSV)
9 Pierre Van Hooijdonk (Feyenoord)
8 Thomas Buffel (Feyenoord)
8 Ahmed Hossam (Ajax)
8 Kenneth Perez (AZ)

HUNGARY

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
MTK	17	12	2	3	34	15	38
Ferencvaros	16	11	2	3	31	11	35
Ujpest	17	9	3	5	37	26	30
Debrecen	17	7	8	2	34	25	29
Gyor	17	8	3	6	28	23	27
Siofok	17	7	5	5	23	22	26
Zalaegerszeg	17	7	4	6	33	29	25
Matav	17	4	4	9	22	31	16
Videoton	17	3	6	8	16	27	15
Dunaferr	17	3	5	9	21	32	14
Bekescsaba	17	4	1	12	23	44	13
Kispest-Honved	16	3	3	10	21	38	12

ITALY

Saturday, December 7

Lazio 3 (Claudio Lopez 10, 31, 37)
Inter 3 (Fernando Couto og 38, Emre 67, 76) Att: 70,000

Milan 1 (Inzaghi 73)
Roma 0 Att: 68,500

Sunday, December 8

Brescia 2 (Schopp 78, Tare 84)
Juventus 0 Att: 19,714

Chievo 0
Bologna 0 Att: 13,680

Modena 1 (Sculli 73)
Como 1 (Bjelanovic 82) Att: 13,407

Parma 2 (Adriano 57, 80)
Reggina 0 Att: 14,398

Perugia 0
Piacenza 0 Att: 5,883

Udinese 2 (Pizarro pen 17, Iaquinta pen 87)
Empoli 1 (Vannucchi 24) Att: 18,242

Saturday, December 14

Bologna 2 (Cruz 42, 43)
Parma 1 (Adriano 28) Att: 17,068

Piacenza 0
Chievo 3 (Della Morte 50, Bierhoff 88, Pellissier 90) Att: 6,139

Sunday, December 15

Brescia 3 (Tare 24, 41, Baggio pen 88)
Perugia 1 (Miccoli 64) Att: 10,687

Como 1 (Pecchia 22)
Milan 2 (Ambrosini 20, Shevchenko 40) Att: 10,508

Empoli 1 (Rocchi 84)
Modena 0 Att: 5,339

Inter 1 (Kalion 70)
Atalanta 0 Att: 57,118

Juventus 1 (Nedved 34)
Lazio 2 (Fiore 35, 50) Att: 38,014

Roma 3 (Samuel 3, Totti 24, Montella 70)
Reggina 0 Att: 50,591

Udinese 1 (Iaquinta 56)
Torino 1 (Lucarelli 59) Att: 14,203

Wednesday, December 18

Como 0
Udinese 1 (Pinzi 34) Att: 6,276
Game abandoned in 82nd minute because of crowd trouble; awarded as 2-0 win to Udinese

Saturday, December 21

Modena 0
Udinese 1 (Pinzi 24) Att: 13,211

Torino 0
Roma 1 (Samuel 46) Att: 14,025

Sunday, December 22

Atalanta 2 (Doni 13, Zenoni 33)
Empoli 2 (Grieco 85, Tavano 89) Att: 13,338

Chievo 2 (Legrottaglie 64, Pellissier 72)
Como 0 Att: 11,527

Lazio 1 (Claudio Lopez 45)
Bologna 1 (Zaccardo 66) Att: 42,685

Milan 0
Brescia 0 Att: 61,724

Parma 1 (Mutu 56)
Inter 2 (Di Biagio 37, Recoba pen 75) Att: 21,133

Perugia 0
Juventus 1 (Camoranesi 90) Att: 19,739

Reggina 3 (Savoldi 49, 64, Di Michele pen 76)
Piacenza 1 (Boselli 12) Att: 24,037

Monday, January 6

Torino 1 (Mezzano pen 60)
Atalanta 1 (Natali 13) Att: 14,591

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan	15	10	3	2	30	10	33
Inter	15	10	3	2	31	16	33
Lazio	15	9	5	1	31	15	32
Chievo	15	9	2	4	26	13	29
Juventus	15	8	5	2	23	12	29
Bologna	15	7	6	2	19	11	27
Udinese	15	7	4	4	15	14	25
Roma	15	6	5	4	27	22	23
Parma	15	6	4	5	26	18	22
Empoli	15	6	3	6	23	21	21
Modena	15	6	1	8	12	22	19
Perugia	15	5	3	7	18	23	18
Brescia	15	4	4	7	19	26	16
Piacenza	15	3	3	9	12	23	12
Atalanta	15	2	4	9	14	27	10
Reggina	15	2	4	9	13	27	10
Torino	15	2	2	11	8	29	8
Como	15	0	5	10	8	26	5

LEADING GOALSCORERS
12 Christian Vieri (Inter)
10 Francesco Totti (Roma)
9 Claudio Lopez (Lazio)
9 Alessandro Del Piero (Juventus)

ITALIAN CUP – last 16

1st legs
Dec 3: Ancona 1 Milan 1; Sampdoria 1 Perugia 1.
Dec 4: Bari 1 Inter 0; Lazio 2 Empoli 0; Triestina 1 Roma 1.
Dec 5: Piacenza 1 Chievo 1; Reggina 0 Juventus 2; Vicenza 1 Bologna 1.

2nd legs
Dec 17: Roma 1 Triestina 1 *Agg 2-2. Roma 4-1 on pens.*
Dec 18: Bologna 0 Vicenza 2 *Vicenza 3-1 on agg;* Chievo 0 Piacenza 0 *Agg 1-1. Chievo on away goals;* Juventus 0 Reggina 1 *Juventus 2-1 on agg;* Milan 5 Ancona 1 *Milan 6-2 on agg.*
Dec 19: Empoli 1 Lazio 2 *Lazio 4-1 on agg;* Inter 1 Bari 2 *Bari 3-1 on agg;* Perugia 2 Sampdoria 0 *Perugia 3-1 on agg.*

KAZAKHSTAN

KAZAKHSTAN: CHAMP'SHIP GP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Irtysh	32	21	8	3	63	14	71
Atyrau	32	19	6	7	43	22	63
Tobol	32	15	7	10	45	43	52
Zhenis	32	14	10	8	40	23	52
Aqtobe	32	13	7	12	37	40	46
Shakhtyor	32	11	10	11	45	39	43

POLAND

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wisla K	15	10	3	2	42	18	33
Katowice	15	10	2	3	21	9	32
Legia	15	8	6	1	26	14	30
Odra	15	8	4	3	23	19	28
Groclin	15	7	5	3	26	20	26
Gornik	15	6	4	5	26	18	22
Amica	15	5	6	4	18	15	21
Ruch C	15	5	5	5	16	21	20
Wisla P	15	5	4	6	17	20	19
Lech	15	3	7	5	16	18	16
Garbarnia	15	4	4	7	24	30	16
Polonia	15	4	4	7	19	27	16
KSZO	15	4	3	8	15	27	15
Zaglebie	15	3	4	8	17	19	13
Widzew	15	2	6	7	13	23	12
Pogon	15	1	3	11	11	32	6

PORTUGAL

Friday, December 6

Belenenses 3 (Ludemar 20, Djalmir 71, Tuck pen 90)
Beira Mar 2 (Fary 38, Ricardo Sousa pen 51)

Saturday, December 7

Sporting Braga 1 (Bordi 12)
Uniao Leiria 1 (Fernando Aguiar 17)

Sunday, December 8

Boavista 3 (Jorge Couto 27, 52, Luiz Claudio 42)
Maritimo 0

Moreirense 1 (Flavio Cordeiro 85)
Academica 0

Pacos Ferreira 1 (Renato 80)
Setubal 2 (Rui Miguel 28, Hugo Henrique 87)

Santa Clara 1 (Figueiredo 75)
FC Porto 3 (Helder Postiga 30, 62, Jankauskas 73)

Sporting Lisbon 0
Benfica 2 (Zahovic 15, Tiago 42)

Varzim 1 (Quim Berto 47)
Nacional 0

Monday, December 9

Gil Vicente 0
Guimaraes 2 (Nuno Assis 35, Fangueiro 89)

Friday, December 13

Setubal 2 (Rui Miguel 30, Jorginho 38)
Varzim 4 (Paulo Vida 65, pen 83, 89, Pepa 79)

Saturday, December 14

Academica 3 (Binho 28, Nuno Luis pen 43, Sandro og 77)
Santa Clara 2 (Brandao 86, Ceara 88)

Benfica 1 (Simao pen 56)
Belenenses 0

Guimaraes 1 (Fangueiro pen 89)
Moreirense 1 (Afonso Martins 79)

Uniao Leiria 3 (Edson 23, Douala 63, Fernando Aguiar 68)
Sporting Lisbon 2 (Joao Pinto 29, Contreras 78)

Sunday, December 15

Maritimo 3 (Marcio Abreu 28, Eric Gaucho 33, Joel Santos 64)
Gil Vicente 1 (Nuno Amaro 46)

Nacional 0
Sporting Braga 0

Monday, December 16

Beira Mar 3 (Ricardo Sousa 3, Luis Manuel 31, Fary 87)
Boavista 3 (Pedro Santos 15, Luiz Claudio 51, Silva 90)

FC Porto 2 (Helder Postiga 31, Jankauskas 89)
Pacos Ferreira 1 (Beto 57)

Saturday, December 21

Belenenses 1 (Verona 42)
Uniao Leiria 3 (Fernando Aguiar 19, Laranjeiro 27, Marcio Santos 44)

Boavista 0
Benfica 0

Sunday, December 22

Gil Vicente 3 (Paulo Alves 33, pen 68, Luis Loureiro 75)
Beira Mar 1 (Fary 44)

Moreirense 2 (Armando 33, Afonso Martins pen 62)
Santa Clara 2 (Ceara pen 3, Aldo 89)

Pacos Ferreira 0
Academica 0

Sporting Braga 1 (Paulo Jorge 8)
Setubal 0

Sporting Lisbon 2 (Joao Pinto 18, 57)
Nacional 0

Varzim 0
FC Porto 2 (Capucho 20, Costinha 88)

Monday, December 23

Guimaraes 2 (Fangueiro 44, Cleber 65)
Maritimo 0

Saturday, January 4

Beira Mar 1 (Fary 76)
Guimaraes 1 (Fangueiro 88)

Setubal 1 (Marcio Carlos 21)
Sporting Lisbon 2 (Rui Jorge 50, Pedro Barbosa pen 74)

Uniao Leiria 1 (Fernando Aguiar 66)
Boavista 0

Sunday, January 5

Academica 2 (Fredy 1, Sergio Carvalho og 26)
Varzim 1 (Sergio Carvalho 80)

Moreirense 2 (Vitor Pereira 41, Demetrios 76)
Maritimo 2 (Eric Gaucho 39, Marcio Abreu 68)

FC Porto 3 (Capucho 45, Deco 50, Jankauskas 74)
Sporting Braga 0

Santa Clara 0
Pacos Ferreira 0

Monday, January 6

Nacional 1 (Adriano 58)
Belenenses 1 (Djalmir 68)

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Porto	16	13	3	0	35	12	42
Benfica	16	10	3	3	33	12	33
Sporting Lisbon	16	10	1	5	27	21	31
Guimaraes	16	9	3	4	32	21	30
Varzim	16	8	1	7	25	22	25
Uniao Leiria	16	7	3	6	23	21	24
Belenenses	16	7	3	6	20	21	24
Gil Vicente	16	7	2	7	23	24	23
Maritimo	16	6	2	8	18	27	20
Nacional	16	5	4	7	19	21	19
Sporting Braga	16	5	4	7	14	25	19
Pacos Ferreira	16	5	3	8	16	24	18
Setubal	16	3	8	5	19	18	17
Boavista	16	4	5	7	14	17	17
Academica	16	3	6	7	18	26	15
Beira Mar	16	3	6	7	17	25	15
Moreirense	16	3	5	8	17	23	14
Santa Clara	16	3	4	9	20	30	13

LEADING GOALSCORERS
10 Simao Sabrosa (Benfica)
9 Adriano (Nacional)
8 Ceara (Maritimo)
8 Eric Gaucho (Maritimo)
8 Helder Postiga (FC Porto)

ROMANIA

Dec 7: Ceahlaul 3 National 1; Gloria 4 UTA 1; Arges 0 Sportul 2; Steaua 1 Otelul 0; Bacau 4 Brasov 0; Astra 2 Poli AEK 1.
Dec 8: Rapid 5 Farul 1; Dinamo 1 U Craiova 0.

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rapid	15	13	0	2	36	11	39
Dinamo	15	9	2	4	29	16	29
Steaua	15	7	4	4	15	13	25
National	15	7	3	5	19	15	24
Gloria	15	6	4	5	19	13	22
Poli AEK	15	7	1	7	22	23	22
Brasov	15	6	3	6	17	19	21
Otelul	15	6	3	6	15	20	21
Bacau	15	5	4	6	16	15	19
Ceahlaul	15	4	6	5	21	16	18
U Craiova	15	5	3	7	18	24	18
Sportul	15	5	2	8	20	23	17
Astra	15	5	2	8	18	25	17
Arges	15	5	2	8	14	21	17
Farul	15	5	2	8	13	21	17
UTA	15	4	1	10	15	32	13

SCOTLAND

Saturday, December 7

Aberdeen 1 (Derek Young 30)
Motherwell 1 (Kinniburg 59) Att: 9,596

Dundee Utd 1 (Wilson 3)
Hibernian 1 (Murray 7) Att: 5,673

Hearts 2 (Kirk 5, pen 70)
Livingston 1 (Zarate 63) Att: 8,074

Kilmarnock 2 (Fulton 57, Boyd 90)
Dundee 0 Att: 4,810

Partick 4 (Britton 5, Burns 45, 52, McLean 70)
Dunfermline 0 Att: 4,110

Rangers 3 (Moore 10, De Boer 35, Mols 40)
Celtic 2 (Sutton 1, Hartson 61) Att: 49,874

Saturday, December 14

Dundee 1 (Sara 35)
Motherwell 1 (Lehmann 25) Att: 5,527

Hearts 1 (Maybury 90)
Partick 0 Att: 9,734

Livingston 1 (Brinquin 90)
Hibernian 2 (Murray 55, James 66) Att: 6,501

Rangers 3 (Ferguson 13, 56, pen 86)
Dundee Utd 0 Att: 47,639

Sunday, December 15

Dunfermline 3 (Crawford 38, McAllister og 46, Brewster pen 64)
Aberdeen 0 Att: 4,835

Kilmarnock 1 (McLaren 19)
Celtic 1 (Valgaeren 66) Att: 9,225

Saturday, December 21

Aberdeen 0
Livingston 0 Att: 11,253

Celtic 2 (Hartson 38, Larsson 54)
Dundee 0 Att: 56,162

Dundee Utd 0
Hearts 3 (De Vries 26, Kirk 41, 51) Att: 6,025

Kilmarnock 2 (McSwegan 63, Fulton 88)
Hibernian 1 (Luna 83) Att: 5,814

Sunday, December 22

Partick 1 (Burns 7)
Rangers 2 (Mols 70, De Boer 79) Att: 10,022

Thursday, December 26

Celtic 4 (Hartson 22, 44, 68, Larsson 73)
Hearts 2 (De Vries 4, 66) Att: 58,450

Dundee 1 (Milne 87)
Aberdeen 2 (McGuire 50, Smith og 64) Att: 8,574

Dunfermline 0
Kilmarnock 2 (McSwegan 70, Boyd 88) Att: 5,847

Hibernian 1 (O'Neil pen 89)
Partick 1 (Burns 78) Att: 10,317

Livingston 3 (Camacho 8, Andrews 51, Bingham 86)
Dundee Utd 0 Att: 5,103

Motherwell 1 (McFadden 65)
Rangers 0 Att: 11,234

Sunday, December 29

Celtic 1 (Larsson 19)
Dunfermline 0 Att: 58,387

Dundee 1 (Milne 57)
Hearts 2 (Kirk 42, Weir 80) Att: 7,340

Hibernian 2 (Paatelainen 70, McManus 85)
Aberdeen 0 Att: 11,604

Kilmarnock 0
Rangers 1 (Lovenkrands 24) Att: 13,396

Livingston 1 (Zarate 87)
Motherwell 0 Att: 7,216

Partick 0
Dundee Utd 0 Att: 5,109

Thursday, January 2

Aberdeen 1 (Anderson 51)
Celtic 1 (Larsson 30) Att: 16,331

Dundee Utd 2 (Dodds 31, McIntyre 90)
Kilmarnock 2 (Canero 21, McLaren 67) Att: 7,183

Dunfermline 2 (Crawford 45, 57)
Livingston 0 Att: 5,218

ESM
EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES

GOLDEN SHOE

ESM GOLDEN SHOE STANDINGS AT 05.01.03

pos	name	team	goals	factor	pts
1	Andrei Krolov	Tallinna VMK (Est)	37	1	37
2	Arman Karamian	Pyunik (Arm)	36	1	36
3	Henrik Larsson	Celtic (Sco)	23	1.5	34.5
4	Mateja Kezman	PSV Eindhoven (Hol)	18	1.5	27
5	Ailton	Werder Bremen (Ger)	13	2	26
	James Beattie	Southampton (Eng)	13	2	26
	Alan Shearer	Newcastle (Eng)	13	2	26
8	Harald Brattbakk	Rosenborg (Nor)	17	1.5	25.5
9	Maksim Gruznov	Trans Narva (Est)	24	1	24
	Thierry Henry	Arsenal (Eng)	12	2	24
	Peter Ijeh	Malmo (Swe)	24	1	24
	Axel Lawaree	Bregenz (Aut)	16	1.5	24
	Christian Vieri	Internazionale (Ita)	12	2	24
14	Tor Henning Hamre	Flora Tallinn (Est)	23	1	23
	Mihail Miholaps	Skonto Riga (Lat)	23	1	23
16	Tryggvi Gudmundsson	Stabaek (Nor)	15	1.5	22.5
	Rolan Gusev	CSKA Moscow (Rus)	15	1.5	22.5
	Dmitri Kirichenko	CSKA Moscow (Rus)	15	1.5	22.5
	Milaim Rama	Thun (Swi)	15	1.5	22.5
	Wesley Sonck	Genk (Blg)	15	1.5	22.5
	Maciej Zurawski	Wisla Krakow (Pol)	15	1.5	22.5
22	Thomas Christiansen	Bochum (Ger)	11	2	22
	Roy Makaay	Dep La Coruna (Spa)	11	2	22
	Shabani Nonda	Monaco (Fra)	11	2	22

For the latest standings, updated twice weekly, visit www.worldsoccer.com

Hearts 4 (Pressley pen 30, De Vries 62, Weir 90, 90)
Hibernian 4 (Townsley 11, McManus 17, James 88, Brebner 89) Att: 17,732

Motherwell 2 (Clarkson 9, Partridge 77)
Partick 2 (Burns 19, pen 49) Att: 6,262

Rangers 3 (Ferguson 21, De Boer 44, Thompson 82)
Dundee 1 (Lovell 23) Att: 49,112

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	24	20	3	1	68	18	63
Celtic	24	19	3	2	63	16	60
Hearts	24	10	7	7	40	41	37
Dunfermline	23	11	3	9	39	41	36
Hibernian	24	10	4	10	36	36	34
Kilmarnock	24	9	6	9	26	36	33
Dundee	24	6	7	11	28	39	25
Partick	24	5	9	10	25	37	24
Aberdeen	24	5	9	10	21	38	24
Livingston	24	6	5	13	31	36	23
Motherwell	23	4	6	13	28	41	18
Dundee Utd	24	3	8	13	20	46	17

LEADING GOALSCORERS
23 Henrik Larsson (Celtic)
14 Stevie Crawford (Dunfermline)
14 Barry Ferguson (Rangers)
13 Mark De Vries (Hearts)
13 John Hartson (Celtic)

SPAIN

Saturday, December 7

Malaga 1 (Dario Silva 76)
Villarreal 1 (Palermo 58) Att: 18,000

Rayo Vallecano 1 (Azkoitia 64)
Barcelona 0 Att: 16,000

Recreativo 1 (Raul Molina 20)
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Diego Tristan 26) Att: 12,500

Sevilla 0
Real Sociedad 1 (Karpin 71) Att: 23,400

Valencia 2 (Angulo 41, Carew 47)
Racing Santander 0 Att: 40,000

Sunday, December 8

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Urzaiz 9)
Osasuna 3 (Aloisi 7, Munoz 15, Ivan Rosado 42) Att: 38,000

Atletico Madrid 1 (Fernando Torres 61)
Valladolid 0 Att: 40,000

Celta Vigo 2 (Edu 21, Luccin pen 24)
Alaves 1 (Ilie pen 49) Att: 17,000

Espanyol 2 (Roger 61, Milosevic 71)
Betis 4 (Capi 11, Juanito 21, Fernando 72, 85) Att: 24,200

Mallorca 1 (Eto'o 17)
Real Madrid 5 (Ronaldo 7, 46, Raul 62, 65, Guti 90) Att: 23,100

Saturday, December 14

Alaves 2 (Ruben Navarro 12, Ilie 30)
Atletico Madrid 0 Att: 14,753

Villarreal 0
Valencia 2 (Carew 52, 61) Att: 16,800

Sunday, December 15

Barcelona 0
Sevilla 3 (Javi Casquero pen 5, Toedtli 77, 87) Att: 54,257

Betis 0
Rayo Vallecano 1 (Onopko 16) Att: 35,000

Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Luque 85)
Malaga 0 Att: 26,000

Osasuna 1 (Antonio Lopez 46)
Espanyol 0 Att: 14,000

Racing Santander 3 (Moran 59, Benayoun 60, 71)
Celta Vigo 0 Att: 15,607

Real Madrid 4 (Raul Bravo 28, Ivan Helguera 65, Raul 70, Figo pen 90)
Recreativo 2 (Cubillo 3, Espinola 14) Att: 66,102

Real Sociedad 2 (De Pedro 51, Aranburu 57)
Mallorca 1 (Eto'o 47) Att: 27,291

Valladolid 2 (Aganzo 62, 72)
Athletic Bilbao 0 Att: 13,500

Saturday, December 21

Athletic Bilbao 2 (Urzaiz 15, Etxeberria 74)
Alaves 0 Att: 40,000

Atletico Madrid 1 (Emerson 52)
Racing Santander 2 (Munitis 43, Javi Guerrero 65) Att: 45,000

Celta Vigo 3 (Catanha 1, Edu 7, Jesuli 64)
Villarreal 1 (Palermo 43) Att: 21,000

Malaga 2 (Musampa 16, Dely Valdes 39)
Real Madrid 3 (Zidane 46, Raul 74, Figo pen 78) Att: 28,000

Mallorca 0
Barcelona 4 (Kluivert 26, 49, 52, Overmars 43) Att: 20,000

Rayo Vallecano 0
Sevilla 1 (Marcos Vales 67) Att: 12,500

Sunday, December 22

Betis 2 (Alfonso 17, Marcos Assuncao 89)
Osasuna 1 (Ivan Rosado 83) Att: 35,000

Espanyol 1 (Milosevic 7)
Valladolid 0 Att: 19,600

Recreativo 1 (Raul Molina 40)
Real Sociedad 3 (Nihat 43, 57, Llorente 90) Att: 18,000

Valencia 0
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Makaay 21) Att: 40,000

Thursday, January 2

Real Madrid 3 (Raul 9, Flavio Conceicao 29, Zidane 74)
Sevilla 0 Att: 70,000

Saturday, January 4

Deportivo La Coruna 3 (Diego Tristan 43, Sergio 48, Luque 90)
Celta Vigo 0 Att: 34,000

Osasuna 0
Rayo Vallecano 1 (Julio Alvarez 22) Att: 15,454

Racing Santander 3 (Munitis 8, Javi Guerrero pen 18, Regueiro 44)
Athletic Bilbao 4 (Moraton og 40, Urzaiz pen 51, Etxeberria 61, 87) Att: 17,320

Valladolid 3 (Fernando Sales 49, 64, Oscar 81)
Betis 0 Att: 11,900

Sunday, January 5

Alaves 2 (Cruyff 32, Soldevilla og 77)
Espanyol 1 (Milosevic 18) Att: 14,170

Barcelona 3 (Rochemback 9, Loren II og 25, Cocu 81)
Recreativo 0 Att: 45,719

Real Madrid 4 (Ronaldo 37, Zidane 68, Guti 86, Portillo 90)
Valencia 1 (Ayala 54) Att: 65,932

Real Sociedad 2 (Nihat 8, Khokhlov 23)
Malaga 2 (Musampa 19, Dario Silva 56) Att: 24,000

Sevilla 3 (Reyes 14, Toedtli 33, 84)
Mallorca 0 Att: 20,000

Villarreal 4 (Unai 26, Palermo 28, 89, Victor 44)
Atletico Madrid 3 (Fernando Torres 31, 90, Santi 42) Att: 18,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Sociedad	16	10	6	0	31	18	36
Real Madrid	16	9	6	1	36	16	33
Dep La Coruna	16	8	5	3	23	17	29
Valencia	16	8	4	4	25	12	28
Celta Vigo	16	8	3	5	20	16	27
Betis	16	7	5	4	26	19	26
Mallorca	16	7	2	7	21	29	23
Barcelona	16	6	4	6	25	19	22
Atletico Madrid	16	5	6	5	23	21	21
Athletic Bilbao	16	6	3	7	25	31	21
Sevilla	16	5	5	6	15	14	20
Racing Santander	16	6	2	8	20	20	20
Valladolid	16	6	2	8	16	18	20
Malaga	16	4	7	5	22	24	19
Alaves	16	5	4	7	19	26	19
Villarreal	16	4	6	6	18	21	18
Osasuna	16	5	3	8	17	22	18
Rayo Vallecano	16	5	3	8	17	23	18
Espanyol	16	4	1	11	16	28	13
Recreativo	16	2	3	11	13	34	9

LEADING GOALSCORERS
11 Roy Makaay (Deportivo La Coruna)
9 Patrick Kluivert (Barcelona)
9 Darko Kovacevic (Real Sociedad)
9 Nihat Kahveci (Real Sociedad)
9 Ismael Urzaiz (Athletic Bilbao)

SWITZERLAND

First phase

Dec 7: Wil 1900 1 Basle 4.
Dec 8: Aarau 2 Thun 0; Delemont 2 Zurich 2; Grasshopper 1 St Gallen 1; Neuchatel Xamax 3 Lucerne 2; Servette 4 Young Boys 4.

SWITZERLAND: 1ST PHASE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Grasshopper	22	15	4	3	58	26	49
Basle	22	14	5	3	57	25	47
Thun	22	9	4	9	33	33	31
Wil 1900	22	8	7	7	43	45	31
Zurich	22	9	4	9	35	37	31
Neuchatel X	22	8	7	7	30	33	31
Young Boys	22	8	6	8	41	41	30
Servette	22	8	5	9	45	37	29
Lucerne*	22	7	5	10	31	38	24
St Gallen	22	6	6	10	31	48	24
Delemont	22	6	2	14	24	44	20
Aarau	22	5	3	14	19	40	18

**2pts deducted for licence application irregularities (reduced from 4pts on appeal)*

Top eight enter championship play-offs; bottom four enter relegation/promotion play-offs

TURKEY

Dec 7: Diyarbakirspor 3 Fenerbahce 0; Istanbulspor 2 Elazigspor 1; Kocaelispor 3 Altay 0; Trabzonspor 1 Denizlispor 0.
Dec 8: Ankaragucu 5 Gaziantepspor 3; Bursaspor 3 Adanaspor 0; Galatasaray 0 Besiktas 1; Goztepe 0 Malatyaspor 3; Samsunspor 2 Genclerbirligi 7.
Dec 13: Gaziantepspor 1 Galatasaray 2.
Dec 14: Adanaspor 1 Kocaelispor 0; Altay 4 Istanbulspor 3; Fenerbahce 0 Goztepe 0; Malatyaspor 2 Trabzonspor 2.
Dec 15: Besiktas 2 Samsunspor 0; Elazigspor 0 Diyarbakirspor 1; Genclerbirligi 2 Bursaspor 0.
Dec 21: Besiktas 1 Bursaspor 0; Adanaspor 0 Istanbulspor 3.
Dec 22: Altay 2 Diyarbakirspor 2; Samsunspor 0 Galatasaray 1; Genclerbirligi 5 Kocaelispor 1; Fenerbahce 3 Trabzonspor 2.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Besiktas	17	12	5	0	28	9	41
Galatasaray	18	12	3	3	28	17	39
Genclerbirligi	18	11	4	3	47	20	37
Fenerbahce	17	10	5	2	39	20	35
Gaziantepspor	17	8	6	3	31	21	30
Trabzonspor	18	8	6	4	22	14	30
Malatyaspor	17	6	7	4	29	21	25
Ankaragucu	16	7	2	7	21	22	23
Diyarbakirspor	18	5	5	8	17	24	20
Istanbulspor	18	5	4	9	21	28	19
Adanaspor	18	4	7	7	19	29	19
Denizlispor	16	4	6	6	17	19	18
Altay	18	5	3	10	25	39	18
Bursaspor	18	3	7	8	23	33	16
Samsunspor	18	4	4	10	18	35	16
Elazigspor	17	4	3	10	18	28	15
Goztepe	17	3	6	8	17	28	15
Kocaelispor	18	4	1	13	20	33	13

UKRAINE

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	15	12	2	1	31	12	38
Dnipro	15	11	2	2	24	8	35
Arsenal	15	10	3	2	38	13	33
Dynamo	15	10	3	2	33	9	33
Metalurh D	15	8	4	3	21	13	28
Volyn-1	15	7	2	6	21	24	23
Kryvbas	15	4	6	5	14	15	18
Tavriya	15	5	2	8	17	25	17
Metalurh M	15	4	4	7	18	22	16
Poligraftekhnika	15	3	7	5	16	22	16
Metalist	15	4	4	7	10	20	16
Karpaty	15	3	6	6	12	16	15
Obolon	15	3	5	7	14	19	14
Vorskla	15	3	2	10	8	27	11
Metalurh Z	15	2	4	9	9	24	10
Chornomorets	15	2	2	11	9	26	8

YUGOSLAVIA

Dec 6: Javor 1 Partizan 2.
Dec 7: OFK 1 Rad 0; Obilic 1 Vojvodina 2; Zeta 3 Rudar P 0; Hajduk K 1 Zemun 0; Radnicki O 0 Red Star 2; Radnicki N 3 Mogren 4; Sutjeska 2 Sartid 1; Cukaricki 1 Zeleznik 0.

YUGOSLAVIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	17	14	2	1	46	22	44
Zeleznik	17	11	2	4	29	17	35
Red Star	17	10	4	3	36	13	34
OFK	17	11	1	5	33	19	34
Sutjeska	17	9	3	5	24	17	30
Vojvodina	17	9	2	6	30	19	29
Hajduk K	17	8	4	5	23	14	28
Sartid	17	6	7	4	26	24	25
Zeta	17	7	3	7	20	21	24
Obilic	17	6	5	6	19	17	23
Zemun	17	7	2	8	21	24	23
Cukaricki	17	6	2	9	23	29	20
Radnicki O	17	4	7	6	18	21	19
Javor	17	5	3	9	11	25	18
Rad	17	3	6	8	15	23	15
Mogren	17	2	4	11	16	37	10
Rudar P	17	2	4	11	10	34	10
Radnicki N	17	1	3	13	13	37	6

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Draw and schedule

1st rnd

Group 1

River Plate (Arg), Emelec (Ecu), Libertad (Par), Deportivo Cali (Col)

Wed, Feb 12: Libertad v Emelec
Wed, Feb 19: Deportivo Cali v River Plate
Tue, Feb 25: Emelec v Deportivo Cali
Thu, Feb 27: River Plate v Libertad
Tue, Mar 11: Deportivo Cali v Libertad
Thu, Mar 13: Emelec v River Plate
Tue, Mar 18: Emelec v Libertad
Thu, Mar 20: River Plate v Deportivo Cali
Tue, Apr 1: Deportivo Cali v Emelec
Wed, Apr 2: Libertad v River Plate
Thu, Apr 17: Libertad v Deportivo Cali
Thu, Apr 17: River Plate v Emelec

Group 2

Paysandu (Bra), Universidad Catolica (Chl), Cerro Porteno (Par), Sporting Cristal (Per)

Thu, Feb 6: Cerro Porteno v Universidad Catolica
Thu, Feb 13: Sporting Cristal v Paysandu
Wed, Feb 19: Universidad Catolica v Sporting Cristal
Thu, Mar 6: Paysandu v Cerro Porteno
Tue, Mar 11: Paysandu v Universidad Catolica
Wed, Mar 12: Sporting Cristal v Cerro Porteno
Tue, Mar 18: Universidad Catolica v Cerro Porteno
Tue, Mar 18: Paysandu v Sporting Cristal
Thu, Mar 27: Cerro Porteno v Paysandu
Thu, Mar 27: Sporting Cristal v Universidad Catolica
Tue, Apr 15: Cerro Porteno v Sporting Cristal
Tue, Apr 15: Universidad Catolica v Paysandu

Group 3

Santos (Bra), El Nacional (Ecu), 12 de Octubre (Par), America (Col)

Wed, Feb 5: 12 de Octubre v El Nacional
Wed, Feb 5: America v Santos
Thu, Feb 20: Santos v 12 de Octubre
Wed, Feb 26: El Nacional v America
Tue, Mar 4: America v 12 de Octubre
Wed, Mar 12: El Nacional v Santos
Wed, Mar 19: El Nacional v 12 de Octubre
Wed, Mar 19: Santos v America
Tue, Mar 25: 12 de Octubre v Santos
Thu, Mar 27: America v El Nacional
Wed, Apr 16: 12 de Octubre v America
Wed, Apr 16: Santos v El Nacional

Group 4

Olimpia (Par), Gimnasia y Esgrima La Plata (Arg), Cobreloa (Chl), Alianza Lima (Per)

Tue, Feb 11: Alianza Lima v Olimpia
Wed, Feb 12: Cobreloa v Gimnasia LP
Thu, Feb 20: Olimpia v Cobreloa
Wed, Feb 26: Gimnasia LP v Alianza Lima
Tue, Mar 4: Gimnasia LP v Olimpia
Wed, Mar 5: Alianza Lima v Cobreloa
Wed, Mar 19: Gimnasia LP v Cobreloa
Thu, Mar 20: Olimpia v Alianza Lima
Tue, Mar 25: Cobreloa v Olimpia
Wed, Mar 26: Alianza Lima v Gimnasia LP
Tue, Apr 8: Cobreloa v Alianza Lima
Tue, Apr 8: Olimpia v Gimnasia LP

Group 5

Gremio (Bra), Bolivar (Bol), Penarol (Uru), Pumas UNAM (Mex)

Tue, Feb 4: Gremio v Pumas UNAM
Tue, Feb 11: Pumas UNAM v Bolivar
Tue, Feb 18: Penarol v Gremio
Tue, Feb 25: Bolivar v Penarol
Tue, Mar 11: Penarol v Pumas UNAM
Thu, Mar 13: Gremio v Bolivar
Tue, Mar 18: Penarol v Bolivar
Thu, Mar 20: Pumas UNAM v Gremio
Tue, Mar 25: Bolivar v Pumas UNAM
Tue, Apr 1: Gremio v Penarol
Thu, Apr 10: Bolivar v Gremio
Thu, Apr 10: Pumas UNAM v Penarol

Group 6

Racing Club (Arg), Oriente Petrolero (Bol), Nacional (Uru), Universitario (Per)

Tue, Feb 18: Racing Club v Universitario
Tue, Feb 25: Nacional v Racing Club
Wed, Feb 26: Universitario v Oriente Petrolero
Thu, Mar 6: Oriente Petrolero v Nacional
Wed, Mar 12: Racing Club v Oriente Petrolero
Wed, Mar 19: Nacional v Universitario
Tue, Mar 25: Universitario v Racing Club
Tue, Apr 1: Nacional v Oriente Petrolero
Tue, Apr 8: Oriente Petrolero v Universitario
Wed, Apr 9: Racing Club v Nacional
Wed, Apr 16: Oriente Petrolero v Racing Club
Wed, Apr 16: Universitario v Nacional

Group 7

Boca Juniors (Arg), Barcelona (Ecu), Colo Colo (Chl), Independiente Medellin (Col)

Thu, Feb 6: Barcelona v Colo Colo
Thu, Feb 20: Boca Juniors v Independiente Medellin
Wed, Feb 26: Colo Colo v Boca Juniors
Thu, Feb 27: Independiente Medellin v Barcelona
Wed, Mar 5: Boca Juniors v Barcelona
Thu, Mar 6: Colo Colo v Independiente Medellin
Thu, Mar 13: Colo Colo v Barcelona
Wed, Mar 26: Independiente Medellin v Boca Juniors
Thu, Apr 3: Boca Juniors v Colo Colo
Thu, Apr 3: Barcelona v Independiente Medellin
Thu, Apr 10: Independiente Medellin v Colo Colo
Thu, Apr 10: Barcelona v Boca Juniors

Group 8

Corinthians (Bra), The Strongest (Bol), Fenix (Uru), Cruz Azul (Mex)

Wed, Feb 5: Corinthians v Cruz Azul
Tue, Feb 18: Cruz Azul v The Strongest
Wed, Feb 19: Fenix v Corinthians
Thu, Feb 27: The Strongest v Fenix
Wed, Mar 5: Fenix v Cruz Azul
Tue, Mar 11: Corinthians v The Strongest
Thu, Mar 20: Fenix v The Strongest
Wed, Mar 26: Cruz Azul v Corinthians
Wed, Apr 2: Corinthians v Fenix
Thu, Apr 3: The Strongest v Cruz Azul
Wed, Apr 9: Cruz Azul v Fenix
Wed, Apr 9: The Strongest v Corinthians

Top two from each group qualify for second round

2nd rnd

Group 8 2nd v Group 1 1st (A)
Group 7 2nd v Group 2 1st (B)
Group 6 2nd v Group 3 1st (C)
Group 5 2nd v Group 4 1st (D)
Group 4 2nd v Group 5 1st (E)
Group 3 2nd v Group 6 1st (F)
Group 2 2nd v Group 7 1st (G)
Group 1 2nd v Group 8 1st (H)
1st legs, April 23; 2nd legs, April 30

Quarter-finals

Winners A v Winners C (Q1)
Winners D v Winners B (Q2)
Winners E v Winners G (Q3)
Winners H v Winners F (Q4)
1st legs, May 21; 2nd legs, May 28

Semi-finals

Winners Q1 v Winners Q3
Winners Q2 v Winners Q4
1st legs, June 4/11; 2nd legs, June 11/18

Final

1st leg, June 25; 2nd leg, July 2

COPA SUDAMERICANA

Final, 2nd leg

Dec 11 - Buenos Aires
San Lorenzo (Arg) 0
Atletico Nacional (Col) 0
Att: 40,779. **Ref:** Gonzalez (Par)
San Lorenzo 4-0 on agg
San Lorenzo: Saja - G Rodriguez, Morel Rodriguez, Paredes, Zurita, Esquivel, Astudillo (Cordone 65), Herron, Acosta (Cabrera 85), Romagnoli, Chatruc (Luna 65).
Atletico: Velasquez - Calle, Vanegas, Guzman, Diaz, Chara, Moreno (Rambal 61), Toro, Grisales, Restrepo, Echeverria (Renteria 80).

BOLIVIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

BOLIVIA: CLOSING – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bolivar	22	15	5	2	70	16	50
Oriente	22	13	4	5	59	32	43
The Strongest	22	10	6	6	46	26	36
Real Potosi	22	10	4	8	46	40	34
Blooming	22	10	2	10	40	53	32
J Wilstermann	22	8	7	7	34	35	31
Iberoamericana	22	9	2	11	30	38	29
San Jose	22	8	5	9	32	47	29
Guabira	22	6	5	11	25	45	23
Union Central	22	5	7	10	28	42	22
Independiente	22	4	8	10	26	39	20
Mariscal Braun	22	5	3	14	21	44	18

BRAZIL

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Final

1st leg - Dec 8
Santos 2 (Alberto 15, Renato 88)
Corinthians 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 58,534. **Ref:** Pereira da Silva

2nd leg - Dec 15
Corinthians 2 (Deivid 75, Anderson 84)
Santos 3 (Robinho pen 37, Elano 88, Leo 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 74,592. **Ref:** Simon
Santos 5-2 on agg

CHILE

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Quarter-finals

2nd legs
Dec 7: Cobresal 1 Colo Colo 3; U Catolica 2 Santiago Wanderers 1.
Dec 8: Cobreloa 2 Dep Concepcion 1; U de Chile 1 Huachipato 1.

Semi-finals

1st legs
Dec 11: U Catolica 0 U de Chile 0.
Dec 12: Colo Colo 2 Cobreloa 0.

2nd legs
Dec 15: U de Chile 0 U Catolica 1; Cobreloa 1 Colo Colo 2.

Final

1st leg - Dec 18
Colo Colo 2 (Espina 47, Quinteros 86)
U Catolica 0
HT: 0-0

2nd leg - Dec 22
U Catolica 2 (Lenci 7, Acevedo 86)
Colo Colo 3 (Espina pen 14, Neira 67, 72)
HT: 1-1
Colo Colo won closing championship

COLOMBIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Play-offs

Dec 4: Bucaramanga 2 Tolima 0; Dep Cali 0 Indep Medellin 1; At Nacional 0 America 0; Magdalena 0 Dep Pasto 0.
Dec 7: America 2 At Nacional 1.
Dec 8: Tolima 1 Bucaramanga 1; Indep Medellin 1 Dep Cali 1; Dep Pasto 3 Magdalena 1.
Dec 11: Dep Cali 1 Tolima 0; Indep Medellin 1 Bucaramanga 0; Magdalena 3 America 1.
Dec 12: Dep Pasto 1 At Nacional 0.
Dec 15: Bucaramanga 1 Dep Cali 2; Tolima 1 Indep Medellin 3; America 3 Dep Pasto 0; At Nacional 2 Magdalena 0.

CLOSING PLAY-OFFS: GP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Indep Medellin	6	3	2	1	7	4	11
Dep Cali	6	3	1	2	8	5	10
Bucaramanga	6	2	1	3	5	8	7
Tolima	6	1	2	3	5	8	5

CLOSING PLAY-OFFS: GP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dep Pasto	6	3	2	1	7	5	11
America	6	3	1	2	8	6	10
Magdalena	6	2	1	3	6	8	7
At Nacional	6	1	2	3	4	6	5

Final

1st leg - Dec 18
Indep Medellin 2 (Munoz 7, Valencia og 66)
Dep Pasto 0
HT: 1-0

2nd leg - Dec 22
Dep Pasto 1 (Escobar 57)
Indep Medellin 1 (Molina 28)
HT: 0-1
Medellin won closing championship

ECUADOR

OVERALL CHAMPIONSHIP

PLAY-OFFS

Dec 4: El Nacional 3 Emelec 1; LDU Quito 1 Dep Quito 1; Barcelona 2 Aucas 1.
Dec 8: El Nacional 2 LDU Quito 1; Aucas 1 Dep Quito 3; Emelec 2 Barcelona 0.
Dec 13: Aucas 0 LDU Quito 3.
Dec 15: Dep Quito 3 Emelec 0; Barcelona 1 El Nacional 1.
Dec 22: Emelec 2 Aucas 1; El Nacional 1 Dep Quito 4; LDU Quito 0 Barcelona 0.

ECUADOR: CH'SHIP PLAY-OFFS – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	
Emelec	10	6	1	3	15	14	20	[1]
Barcelona	10	4	4	2	14	10	19	[3]
El Nacional	10	5	1	4	12	12	18	[2]
LDU Quito	10	4	2	4	11	12	15	[1]
Dep Quito	10	3	2	5	15	14	14	[3]
Aucas	10	2	2	6	13	18	8	[0]

Bonus points in brackets

PERU

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Dec 4: Sporting Cristal 1 Universitario 1; Alianza Lima 1 Sport Boys 1.
Dec 8: Alianza Atletico 2 Alianza Lima 2; Juan Aurich 5 Sporting Cristal 2; Sport Boys 0 Estudiantes 1; Cienciano 4 Dep Wanka 1; Universitario 1 Melgar 2; Coronel Bolognesi 0 Coopsol Trujillo 1.

PERU: CLOSING – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting Cristal	22	13	7	2	46	18	46
Alianza Lima*	22	13	6	3	40	18	42
Alianza Atletico*	22	11	6	5	34	26	36
Cienciano	22	11	3	8	50	44	36
Estudiantes	22	9	5	8	36	29	32
Sport Boys	22	7	8	7	28	24	29
Dep Wanka	22	7	8	7	30	35	29
Coronel Bolognesi	22	8	4	10	24	29	28
Melgar	22	6	7	9	25	33	25
Juan Aurich	22	5	5	12	20	35	20
Universitario	22	4	7	11	27	36	19
Coopsol Trujillo	22	3	4	15	18	51	13

**3pts deducted for failing to carry out doping tests*

OVERALL CHAMPIONSHIP

PLAY-OFF

Contested by the winners of the opening and closing championships provided they finished in the top four of both tournaments. Opening winners Universitario failed to manage this in the closing championship; closing winners Sporting Cristal are therefore overall champions

URUGUAY

OVERALL CHAMPIONSHIP

PLAY-OFF

1st leg - Dec 4
Danubio 1 (Biaggio 48)
Nacional 2 (Vanzini 51, Peralta 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Vazquez

2nd leg - Dec 8
Nacional 2 (Scotti 16, R Morales 88)
Danubio 1 (Perrone 63)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 60,000. **Ref:** Mendez
Sent off: Lucas (Danubio) 90min
Nacional won overall championship

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

MEXICO

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Quarter-finals

1st legs
Dec 4: Cruz Azul 0 Pumas UNAM 0; Guadalajara 2 Toluca 1; Tecos UAG 1 Morelia 3.
Dec 5: Santos 3 America 3.

2nd legs
Dec 7: Morelia 4 Tecos UAG 1 *Morelia 7-2 on agg;* Toluca 3 Guadalajara 0 *Toluca 4-2 on agg.*
Dec 8: America 1 Santos 2 *Santos 5-4 on agg;* Pumas UNAM 3 Cruz Azul 2 *Pumas 3-2 on agg.*

Semi-finals

1st legs
Dec 11: Santos 3 Toluca 5.
Dec 12: Morelia 4 Pumas UNAM 0.

2nd legs
Dec 14: Toluca 2 Santos 1 *Toluca 7-4 on agg.*
Dec 15: Pumas UNAM 2 Morelia 1 *Morelia 5-2 on agg.*

Final

1st leg - Dec 18 - Estadio Morelos, Morelia
Morelia 1 (Saavadra 59)
Toluca 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Brizio

2nd leg - Dec 21 - Estadio Nemesio Diez, Toluca
Toluca 4 (Carmona 33, Lopez 41, Cardozo 50, Garcia 65)
Morelia 1 (Bautista 1)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Ramos Rizo
Toluca 4-2 on agg

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2002

Final, 2nd leg

Dec 13 - Cairo
Zamalek (Egy) 1 (Tamer Abdel Hamied 45)
Raja Casablanca (Mor) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 70,000. **Ref:** Shelmani (Lby)
Zamalek 1-0 on agg

2003 edition draw

Preliminary rnd

Wallidan (Gam) v Dragons l'Oueme (Ben)
FC Nouadhibou (Mra) v AS Niamey (Ngr)
Ela Nguema (EqG) v AS Douanes (Tog)
SC Villa (Uga) v Muzinga (Brd)
St George (Eth) v Rayon Sport (Rwa)
AS Adema (Mad) v St Louisienne (Reu)
Red Sea (Eri) v Nzoia Sugar (Ken)
Simba SC (Tan) v Botswana Defence Force XI (Bot)
La Passe or St Michel United (Sey) v AS Port Louis 2000 (Mrs)

1st legs, February 15-16; 2nd legs, March 1-2

1st rnd

USM Alger (Alg) v Wallidan/Dragons l'Oueme
Stade Malien (Mli) v AS Police (Con)
Canon Yaounde (Cam) v Al Merreikh (Sud)
FC St Eloi Lupopo (DRC) v US Mbila Nziami (Gab)
ASEC Abidjan (IvC) v FC Nouadhibou/AS Niamey
Hassania Agadir (Mor) v Al Ittihad (Lby)
Hearts of Oak (Gha) v Ela Nguema/AS Douanes
AS Aviacao (Ang) v SC Villa/Muzinga
Jeanne d'Arc (Sen) v ASFA Yenenga (BuF)
Enyimba (Nig) v Satellite (Gui)
Esperance (Tun) v St George/Rayon Sport
Highlanders (Zim) v AS Adema/St Louisienne
Zamalek (Egy, holders) v Red Sea/Nzoia Sugar
Santos (SAf) v Simba SC/Botswana Defence Force XI
Ismaili (Egy) v Zanaco (Zam)
Ferroviario Maputo (Moz) v La Passe/St Michel United/AS Port Louis 2000

1st legs, April 11-13; 2nd legs, April 25-27

2nd rnd

Stade Malien/AS Police v USM Alger/Wallidan/Dragons l'Oueme
FC St Eloi Lupopo/US Mbila Nziami v Canon Yaounde/Al Merreikh
Hassania Agadir/Al Ittihad v ASEC Abidjan/FC Nouadhibou/AS Niamey
AS Aviacao/SC Villa/Muzinga v Hearts of Oak/Ela Nguema/AS Douanes
Enyimba/Satellite v Jeanne d'Arc/ASFA Yenenga
Highlanders/AS Adema/St Louisienne v Esperance/St George/Rayon Sport
Santos/Simba SC/Botswana Defence Force XI v Zamalek/Red Sea/Nzoia Sugar
Ferroviario Maputo/La Passe/St Michel United/AS Port Louis 2000 v Ismaili/Zanaco

CUP-WINNERS CUP 2002

Final, 2nd leg

Dec 8 - Kumasi
Asante Kotoko (Gha) 2 (Ansah 55, M Osei 86)
Wydad Casablanca (Mor) 1 (Talha 76)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 80,000
Agg 2-2. Wydad on away goals

2003 edition draw

Preliminary rnd

Anse Reunion (Sey) v Masvigo or Railstar (Zim)
Olympique Moka (Mrs) v AS Fortior (Mad)
Lesotho Defence Force (Les) v Jomo Cosmos (SAf)
JS Pobe (Ben) v AS Agadez (Ngr)

1st legs, February 15-16; 2nd legs, March 1-2

1st rnd

Kenya Pipeline (Ken) v Anse Reunion/Masvigo/Railstar
Power Dynamos (Zam) v Olympique Moka/AS Fortior
Mount Cameroon (Cam) v Akonangui (EqG)
Asante Kotoko (Gha) v Mighty Blue Angels (Lbr)
US Kenya (DRC) v APR FC (Rwa)
Etoile du Congo (Con) v Petro Atletico (Ang)
Africa Sports (IvC) v Dyto de Lome (Tog)
Maghreb Fes or Raja Casablanca (Mor) v Hafia (Gui)
Widad Tlemcan (Alg) v Al Hilal (Lby)
Wydad Casablanca (Mor, holders) v ASC Nasr de Sebkha (Mra)
Baladeyet Al Mehalla (Egy) v Police FC (Uga)
Insurance (Eth) v Al Hilal (Sud)
Mozambique representatives v Lesotho Defence Force/Jomo Cosmos

1st legs, April 11-13; 2nd legs, April 25-27

CAF CUP 2003

Draw

1st rnd

La Passe or St Michel United (Sey) v Dominan'i
Soavina Atsimondrano (Mad)
Green Buffaloes (Zam) v Express (Uga)
Maxaquene (Moz) v Zimbabwe representatives
Khartoum (Sud) v Kiyovu Sport (Rwa)
Coffee FC (Eth) v Anassar (Lby)
AS Kaloum (Gui) v AS Sonacos (Sen)
Etoile Filante (BuF) v Morocco representatives
FC 105 Libreville (Gab) v Djoliba (Mli)
Requins Atlantique (Ben) v Club Africain (Tun)
CS La Mancha (Con) v JCA (IvC)
Cotonsport (Cam) v Maranatha de Fiokpo (Tog)
Primeiro Agosto (Ang) v Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf)
Daring Club Motema Pembe (DRC) v Renacimiento (EqG)
Enugu Rangers (Nig) v LISCR (Lbr)

1st legs, April 11-13; 2nd legs, April 25-27

Byes: JS Kabylie (Alg), Al Ahly (Egy)

ANGOLA

ANGOLA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AS Aviacao	26	17	6	3	44	16	57
Primeiro Agosto	26	15	8	3	39	11	53
Petro Atletico	26	15	6	5	47	17	51
Petro Huambo	26	11	7	8	29	27	40
Academica Lobito	26	10	9	7	28	27	39
Inter Clube	26	10	9	7	28	24	39
Sporting Clube	26	9	8	9	18	23	35
Benfica Luanda	26	8	8	10	23	27	32
Sagrada Esp'nca	26	8	7	11	17	29	31
Desportivo Huila	26	8	5	13	26	40	29
Sonangol Namibe	26	6	10	10	18	23	28
FC Cabinda	26	7	5	14	25	39	26
Sporting Bie	26	7	3	16	18	31	24
Benfica Lubango	26	4	3	19	14	40	15

CAMEROON

CAMEROON – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Canon Yaounde	30	15	10	5	41	22	55
Cotonsport	30	14	11	5	37	19	53
Bamboutos	30	12	14	4	24	19	50
Unisport Bafang	30	10	14	6	35	24	44
Tonnerre Yaounde	30	10	10	10	41	35	40
Mount Cameroon	30	8	15	7	28	24	39
Union Douala	30	9	11	10	24	30	38
Sable Batie	30	7	16	7	24	22	37
Racing Baf'sam	30	9	10	11	21	20	37
Fovu Baham	30	9	10	11	21	28	37
Stade Bandjoun	30	9	10	11	23	36	37
Cintra Yaounde	30	8	12	10	31	30	36
Victoria Utd	30	8	11	11	22	24	35
Kumbo Strikers	30	7	11	12	20	31	32
AS de la Mairie	30	8	7	15	32	42	31
Esperance Guider	30	6	10	14	17	36	28

GHANA

GHANA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hearts of Oak	30	25	3	2	72	18	78
Asante Kotoko	30	23	4	3	54	20	73
Liberty Prof's	30	13	9	8	37	24	48
Great Olympics	30	11	11	8	36	33	44
King Faisal Babies	30	10	10	10	34	29	40
Real Tamale Utd	30	11	7	12	28	38	40
Goldfields	30	9	11	10	34	32	38
Brong Ahofu Utd	30	10	8	12	24	38	38
Hasaacas	30	11	4	15	27	33	37
Arsenals	30	10	6	14	24	34	36
Prestea Mines	30	10	5	15	22	33	35
Tano Bafoakwa	30	7	13	10	25	31	34
Okwahu Utd	30	8	8	14	23	27	32
Power FC	30	7	10	13	23	35	31
Dawu Youngstars	30	7	9	14	28	38	30
Maxbees	30	4	10	16	23	51	22

IVORY COAST

CHAMP'SHIP PLAY-OFFS – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ASEC Abidjan	10	7	1	2	20	8	22
JC Abidjan	10	5	3	2	19	10	18
Satellite FC	10	5	1	4	16	15	16
Stella Club	10	3	2	5	15	21	11
Stade Abidjan	10	2	4	4	10	17	10
Africa Sports	10	2	1	7	8	17	7

NIGERIA

NIGERIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Enyimba	34	18	7	9	34	19	61
Enugu Rangers	34	17	6	11	42	30	57
Kano Pillars	34	17	5	12	40	35	56
Iwuanyanwu Nat	34	17	3	14	41	31	54
Bendel Insurance	34	15	8	11	35	27	53
Julius Berger	34	15	7	12	32	25	52
Sunshine Stars	34	15	5	14	36	34	50
Gombe United	34	16	1	17	36	43	49
Sharks Port H'c't	34	13	9	12	41	39	48
Wikki Tourists	34	15	3	16	33	34	48
Gabros Intl	34	15	2	17	31	36	47
Lobi Stars	34	14	5	15	34	37	47
Jigawa GS	34	14	4	16	33	37	46
Plateau Utd	34	13	5	16	28	29	44
NPA	34	10	11	13	26	29	41
Yobe Desert Stars	34	11	6	17	26	36	39
El-Kanemi W'iors	34	10	9	15	24	33	39
Jasper Utd	34	9	8	17	23	48	35

ASIA

JAPAN

EMPEROR'S CUP – Final

Jan 1 - National stadium, Tokyo
Kashima Antlers 1 (Euller 15)
Kyoto Purple Sanga 2 (Park Ji-sung 49, Kurobe 85)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 50,526. **Ref:** Okada
Sent off: Sogahata (Kashima) 88min

SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Armed Forces	33	26	6	1	104	37	84
Home Utd	33	18	10	5	71	42	64
Geylang Utd	33	17	8	8	80	39	59
Tampines Rovers	33	16	11	6	67	39	59
Woodlands	33	17	7	9	75	44	58
Sembawang	33	15	5	13	59	67	50
Jurong	33	13	6	14	47	48	45
Sengkang Marine*	33	11	6	16	62	84	39
Tanjong Pagar	33	11	4	18	49	72	37
Clementi Khalsa	33	7	4	22	45	84	25
Balestier Central	33	6	5	22	50	103	23
Gombak Utd	33	2	6	25	33	83	12

**Formerly Marine Castle Utd*

SOUTH KOREA

SOUTH KOREA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Songnam Ilhwa	27	14	7	6	43	32	49
Ulsan Hyundai	27	13	8	6	37	27	47
Suwon Bluewings	27	12	9	6	40	26	45
Anyang Cheetahs	27	11	7	9	37	30	40
Ch'nam Dragons	27	9	10	8	21	21	37
Pohang Steelers	27	9	9	9	31	34	36
Chonbuk Hyundai	27	8	11	8	37	36	35
Bucheon SK	27	8	8	11	32	40	32
Busan I.cons	27	6	8	13	36	45	26
Daejeon Citizen	27	1	11	15	16	39	14

Transfer trail

(loan deals in italics)

Madji ADJAOUD	M	Sedan	Gent
Yakubu AIYEGBENI	*F*	*Maccabi Haifa*	*Portsmouth*
Kanga AKALE	F	Zurich	Auxerre
Federico ARIAS	M	Velez Sarsfield	Southampton
Kevin BEGOIS	G	Mechelen	Roda JC
Markus BEIERLE	F	Hansa Rostock	Eintracht Frankfurt
Selim BENACHOUR	*M*	*Paris Saint-Germain*	*Troyes*
Vladimir BESCHASTNYKH	F	Moscow Spartak	Fenerbahce
Mark BOSNICH	G	Chelsea	out of contract
Lee BOWYER	M	Leeds	West Ham
Nicola CACCIA	F	Piacenza	Como
Cleber CHALA	M	Southampton	out of contract
Jamie CLAPHAM	D	Ipswich	Birmingham
Stephen CLEMENCE	M	Tottenham	Birmingham
Ferdinand COLY	*D*	*Lens*	*Birmingham*
Olivier DACOURT	*M*	*Leeds*	*Roma*
Ciro DE CESARE	F	Como	Piacenza
Billy DODDS	F	Rangers	Dundee United
Tosin DOSUMU	M	Mechelen	Westerlo
Christoph DUGARRY	*F*	*Bordeaux*	*Birmingham*
Francisco FARINOS	*M*	*Internazionale*	*Villarreal*
Claudio FERRARESE	*M*	*Napoli*	*Piacenza*
Karl Oscar FJORTOFT	M	Molde	Hammarby
Mohammed GARGO	D	Udinese	Venezia
GEOVANNI	*F*	*Barcelona*	*Benfica*
Jonathan GOULD	G	Celtic	Preston
Gilles GRIMANDI	M	out of contract	Major League Soccer
Rolf-Christel GUIE-MIEN	F	Eintracht Frankfurt	Freiburg
Rory HEGELMEERS	M	Mechelen	St Truiden
Brutil HOSE	F	Ajax	Sparta Rotterdam
Lukas JAROLIM	M	Pribram	Sedan
Ivan KAVIEDES	*F*	*Celta Vigo*	*Puebla*
Vaclav KOLOUSEK	M	Salernitana	Slovan Liberec
LEE Young-pyo	*M*	*Anyang Cheetahs*	*PSV*
Ken LEEMANS	D	Mechelen	Roda JC
Milan LESNJAK	D	Club Brugge	out of contract
Laurent MACQUET	M	Cannes	Charleroi
Brian McBRIDE	*F*	*Columbus Crew*	*Everton*
Grzegorz MIELCARSKI	F	AEK Athens	Amica Wronki
Dalibor MITROVIC	F	St Truiden	Rad
Laurent MONTOYA	*D*	*Lyon*	*Lorient*
Richard MORALES	F	Nacional (Uru)	Osasuna
Pierre NJANKA	D	Strasbourg	Sedan
Sunday OLISEH	*M*	*Borussia Dortmund*	*Bochum*
PARK Ji-sung	D	Kyoto Purple Sanga	PSV
Mariano PERNIA	*D*	*Independiente (Arg)*	*Recreativo*
Pablo QUATROCCHI	D	Estudiantes de La Plata	Wolfsburg
Milan RAPAJIC	F	Fenerbahce	out of contract
Paul SHEERIN	M	Ayr	Aberdeen
Franck SILVESTRE	*F*	*Montpellier*	*Bastia*
Serhii SKACHENKO	F	Metz	Aarau
David SOMMEIL	D	Bordeaux	Manchester City
Marius STANKEVICIUS	*D*	*Brescia*	*Cosenza*
Earnie STEWART	*M*	*NAC Breda*	*Major League Soccer*
Ilia STOLICA	F	Zemun	Metalurh Donetsk
Kenneth STORVIK	M	Rosenborg	Djurgardens
Dmitri SYCHEV	F	Moscow Spartak	Marseille
Naohiro TAKAHARA	F	Jubilo Iwata	Hamburg
Stephen THOMPSON	F	Dundee United	Rangers
Steve TOSH	M	Falkirk	Aberdeen
TUCHO	*M*	*America Mineiro*	*Santa Clara*
Jan VAN HALST	M	Ajax	Vitesse

EURO 2004 QUALIFIERS

Group 1

France, Slovenia, Israel, Cyprus, Malta

07.09.02 .....Cyprus-France 1-2
07.09.02 .....Slovenia-Malta 3-0
12.10.02 .....France-Slovenia 5-0
12.10.02 .....Malta-Israel 0-2
16.10.02 .....Malta-France 0-4
20.11.02 .....Cyprus-Malta 2-1
29.03.03 .....Cyprus-Israel
29.03.03 .....France-Malta
02.04.03 .....Israel-France
02.04.03 .....Slovenia-Cyprus
30.04.03 .....Israel-Cyprus
30.04.03 .....Malta-Slovenia
07.06.03 .....Israel-Slovenia
07.06.03 .....Malta-Cyprus
06.09.03 .....France-Cyprus
06.09.03 .....Slovenia-Israel
10.09.03 .....Israel-Malta
10.09.03 .....Slovenia-France
11.10.03 .....Cyprus-Slovenia
11.10.03 .....France-Israel

GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	3	3	0	0	11	1	9
Israel	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Cyprus	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Slovenia	2	1	0	1	3	5	3
Malta	4	0	0	4	1	11	0

Group 2

Romania, Denmark, Norway, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Luxembourg

07.09.02 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-Romania 0-3
07.09.02 .....Norway-Denmark 2-2
12.10.02 .....Denmark-Luxembourg 2-0
12.10.02 .....Romania-Norway 0-1
16.10.02 .....Luxembourg-Romania 0-7
16.10.02 .....Norway-Bosnia-Herzegovina 2-0
29.03.03 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-Luxembourg
29.03.03 .....Romania-Denmark
02.04.03 .....Denmark-Bosnia-Herzegovina
02.04.03 .....Luxembourg-Norway
07.06.03 .....Denmark-Norway
07.06.03 .....Romania-Bosnia-Herzegovina
11.06.03 .....Luxembourg-Denmark
11.06.03 .....Norway-Romania
06.09.03 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-Norway
06.09.03 .....Romania-Luxembourg
10.09.03 .....Denmark-Romania
10.09.03 .....Luxembourg-Bosnia-Herzegovina
11.10.03 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-Denmark
11.10.03 .....Norway-Luxembourg

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Norway	3	2	1	0	5	2	7
Romania	3	2	0	1	10	1	6
Denmark	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Bosnia-Herz	2	0	0	2	0	5	0
Luxembourg	2	0	0	2	0	9	0

Group 3

Czech Republic, Holland, Austria, Belarus, Moldova

07.09.02 .....Austria-Moldova 2-0
07.09.02 .....Holland-Belarus 3-0
12.10.02 .....Belarus-Austria 0-2
12.10.02 .....Moldova-Czech Republic 0-2
16.10.02 .....Austria-Holland 0-3
16.10.02 .....Czech Republic-Belarus 2-0
29.03.03 .....Belarus-Moldova
29.03.03 .....Holland-Czech Republic
02.04.03 .....Czech Republic-Austria
02.04.03 .....Moldova-Holland
07.06.03 .....Belarus-Holland
07.06.03 .....Moldova-Austria
11.06.03 .....Austria-Belarus
11.06.03 .....Czech Republic-Moldova
06.09.03 .....Belarus-Czech Republic
06.09.03 .....Holland-Austria
10.09.03 .....Czech Republic-Holland
10.09.03 .....Moldova-Belarus
11.10.03 .....Austria-Czech Republic
11.10.03 .....Holland-Moldova

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Holland	2	2	0	0	6	0	6
Czech Republic	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Austria	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
Moldova	2	0	0	2	0	4	0
Belarus	3	0	0	3	0	7	0

Group 4

Sweden, Poland, Hungary, Latvia, San Marino

07.09.02 .....Latvia-Sweden 0-0
07.09.02 .....San Marino-Poland 0-2
12.10.02 .....Poland-Latvia 0-1
12.10.02 .....Sweden-Hungary 1-1
16.10.02 .....Hungary-San Marino 3-0
20.11.02 .....San Marino-Latvia 0-1
29.03.03 .....Poland-Hungary
02.04.03 .....Hungary-Sweden
02.04.03 .....Poland-San Marino
30.04.03 .....Latvia-San Marino
07.06.03 .....Hungary-Latvia
07.06.03 .....San Marino-Sweden
11.06.03 .....San Marino-Hungary
11.06.03 .....Sweden-Poland
06.09.03 .....Latvia-Poland
06.09.03 .....Sweden-San Marino
10.09.03 .....Latvia-Hungary
10.09.03 .....Poland-Sweden
11.10.03 .....Hungary-Poland
11.10.03 .....Sweden-Latvia

GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Latvia	3	2	1	0	2	0	7
Hungary	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Poland	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Sweden	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
San Marino	3	0	0	3	0	6	0

Group 5

Germany, Scotland, Iceland, Lithuania, Faroe Islands

07.09.02 .....Faroe Islands-Scotland 2-2
07.09.02 .....Lithuania-Germany 0-2
12.10.02 .....Iceland-Scotland 0-2
12.10.02 .....Lithuania-Faroe Islands 2-0
16.10.02 .....Germany-Faroe Islands 2-1
16.10.02 .....Iceland-Lithuania 3-0
29.03.03 .....Germany-Lithuania
29.03.03 .....Scotland-Iceland
02.04.03 .....Lithuania-Scotland
07.06.03 .....Iceland-Faroe Islands
07.06.03 .....Scotland-Germany
11.06.03 .....Faroe Islands-Germany
11.06.03 .....Lithuania-Iceland
20.08.03 .....Faroe Islands-Iceland
06.09.03 .....Iceland-Germany
06.09.03 .....Scotland-Faroe Islands
10.09.03 .....Faroe Islands-Lithuania
10.09.03 .....Germany-Scotland
11.10.03 .....Germany-Iceland
11.10.03 .....Scotland-Lithuania

GROUP 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
Scotland	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Iceland	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Lithuania	3	1	0	2	2	5	3
Faroe Islands	3	0	1	2	3	6	1

Group 6

Spain, Ukraine, Greece, Northern Ireland, Armenia

07.09.02 .....Armenia-Ukraine 2-2
07.09.02 .....Greece-Spain 0-2
12.10.02 .....Spain-Northern Ireland 3-0
12.10.02 .....Ukraine-Greece 2-0
16.10.02 .....Greece-Armenia 2-0
16.10.02 .....Northern Ireland-Ukraine 0-0
29.03.03 .....Armenia-Northern Ireland
29.03.03 .....Ukraine-Spain
02.04.03 .....Northern Ireland-Greece
02.04.03 .....Spain-Armenia
07.06.03 .....Spain-Greece
07.06.03 .....Ukraine-Armenia
11.06.03 .....Greece-Ukraine
11.06.03 .....Northern Ireland-Spain
06.09.03 .....Armenia-Greece
06.09.03 .....Ukraine-Northern Ireland
10.09.03 .....Northern Ireland-Armenia
10.09.03 .....Spain-Ukraine
11.10.03 .....Armenia-Spain
11.10.03 .....Greece-Northern Ireland

GROUP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain	2	2	0	0	5	0	6
Ukraine	3	1	2	0	4	2	5
Greece	3	1	0	2	2	4	3
Armenia	2	0	1	1	2	4	1
Northern Ireland	2	0	1	1	0	3	1

Group 7

Turkey, England, Slovakia, Macedonia, Liechtenstein

07.09.02 .....Turkey-Slovakia 3-0
08.09.02 .....Liechtenstein-Macedonia 1-1
12.10.02 .....Macedonia-Turkey 1-2
12.10.02 .....Slovakia-England 1-2
16.10.02 .....England-Macedonia 2-2
16.10.02 .....Turkey-Liechtenstein 5-0
29.03.03 .....Liechtenstein-England
29.03.03 .....Macedonia-Slovakia
02.04.03 .....England-Turkey
02.04.03 .....Slovakia-Liechtenstein
07.06.03 .....Macedonia-Liechtenstein
07.06.03 .....Slovakia-Turkey
11.06.03 .....England-Slovakia
11.06.03 .....Turkey-Macedonia
06.09.03 .....Liechtenstein-Turkey
06.09.03 .....Macedonia-England
10.09.03 .....England-Liechtenstein
10.09.03 .....Slovakia-Macedonia
11.10.03 .....Liechtenstein-Slovakia
11.10.03 .....Turkey-England

GROUP 7

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Turkey	3	3	0	0	10	1	9
England	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Macedonia	3	0	2	1	4	5	2
Liechtenstein	2	0	1	1	1	6	1
Slovakia	2	0	0	2	1	5	0

Group 8

Belgium, Croatia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Andorra

07.09.02 .....Belgium-Bulgaria 0-2
07.09.02 .....Croatia-Estonia 0-0
12.10.02 .....Andorra-Belgium 0-1
12.10.02 .....Bulgaria-Croatia 2-0
16.10.02 .....Bulgaria-Andorra 2-1
16.10.02 .....Estonia-Belgium 0-1
29.03.03 .....Croatia-Belgium
02.04.03 .....Croatia-Andorra
02.04.03 .....Estonia-Bulgaria
30.04.03 .....Andorra-Estonia
07.06.03 .....Bulgaria-Belgium
07.06.03 .....Estonia-Andorra
11.06.03 .....Belgium-Andorra
11.06.03 .....Estonia-Croatia
06.09.03 .....Andorra-Croatia
06.09.03 .....Bulgaria-Estonia
10.09.03 .....Andorra-Bulgaria
10.09.03 .....Belgium-Croatia
11.10.03 .....Belgium-Estonia
11.10.03 .....Croatia-Bulgaria

GROUP 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bulgaria	3	3	0	0	6	1	9
Belgium	3	2	0	1	2	2	6
Estonia	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Croatia	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
Andorra	2	0	0	2	1	3	0

Group 9

Italy, Yugoslavia, Finland, Wales, Azerbaijan

07.09.02 .....Azerbaijan-Italy 0-2
07.09.02 .....Finland-Wales 0-2
12.10.02 .....Finland-Azerbaijan 3-0
12.10.02 .....Italy-Yugoslavia 1-1
16.10.02 .....Wales-Italy 2-1
16.10.02 .....Yugoslavia-Finland 2-0
20.11.02 .....Azerbaijan-Wales 0-2
12.02.03 .....Yugoslavia-Azerbaijan
29.03.03 .....Italy-Finland
29.03.03 .....Wales-Azerbaijan
02.04.03 .....Yugoslavia-Wales
07.06.03 .....Finland-Yugoslavia
11.06.03 .....Azerbaijan-Yugoslavia
11.06.03 .....Finland-Italy
06.09.03 .....Azerbaijan-Finland
06.09.03 .....Italy-Wales
10.09.03 .....Wales-Finland
10.09.03 .....Yugoslavia-Italy
11.10.03 .....Italy-Azerbaijan
11.10.03 .....Wales-Yugoslavia

GROUP 9

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wales	3	3	0	0	6	1	9
Yugoslavia	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Italy	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Finland	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
Azerbaijan	3	0	0	3	0	7	0

Group 10

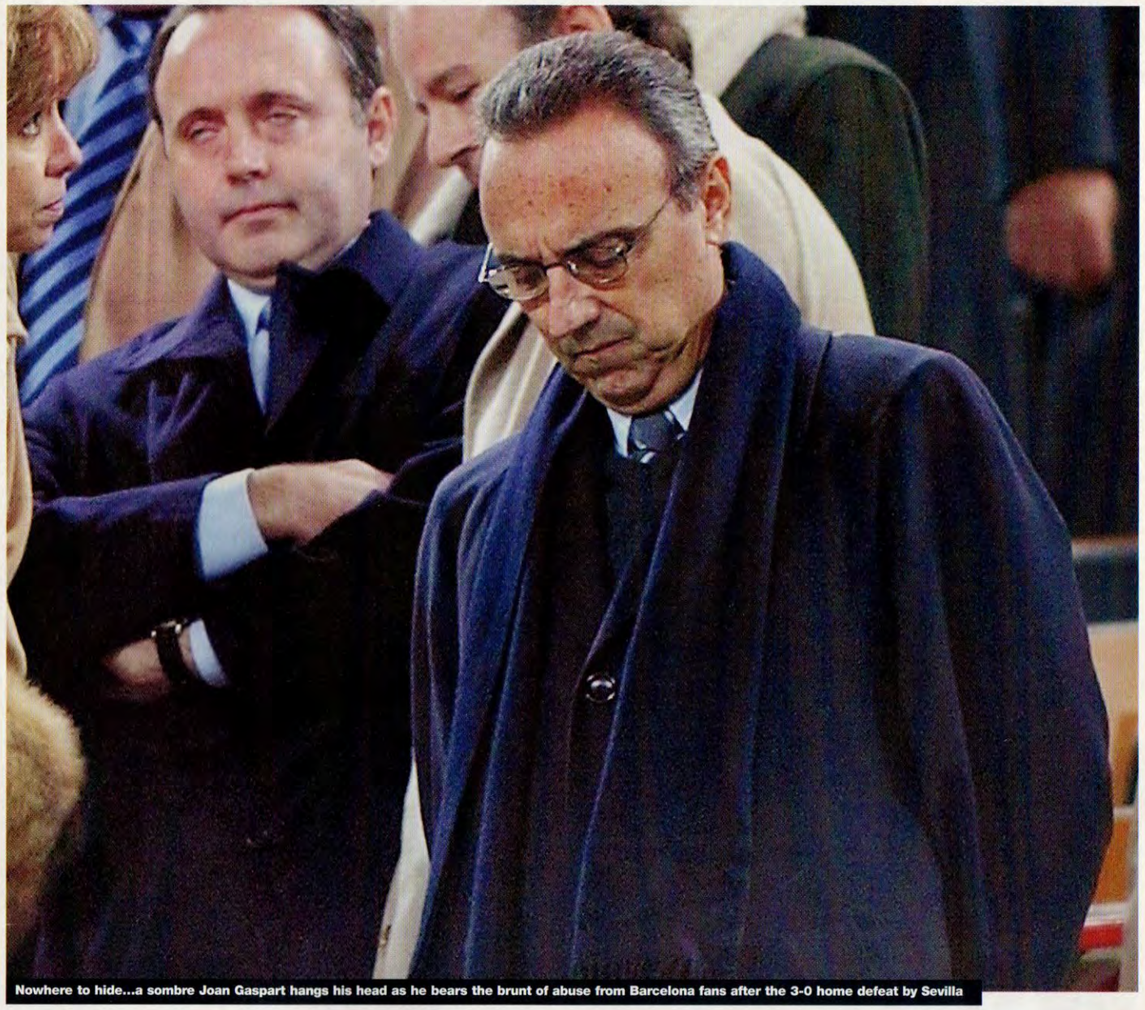
Rep Ireland, Russia, Switzerland, Georgia, Albania

07.09.02 .....Russia-Rep Ireland 4-2
08.09.02 .....Switzerland-Georgia 4-1
12.10.02 .....Albania-Switzerland 1-1
16.10.02 .....Rep Ireland-Switzerland 1-2
16.10.02 .....Russia-Albania 4-1
29.03.03 .....Albania-Russia
29.03.03 .....Georgia-Rep Ireland
02.04.03 .....Albania-Rep Ireland
02.04.03 .....Georgia-Switzerland
30.04.03 .....Georgia-Russia
07.06.03 .....Rep Ireland-Albania
07.06.03 .....Switzerland-Russia
11.06.03 .....Rep Ireland-Georgia
11.06.03 .....Switzerland-Albania
06.09.03 .....Georgia-Albania
06.09.03 .....Rep Ireland-Russia
10.09.03 .....Albania-Georgia
10.09.03 .....Russia-Switzerland
11.10.03 .....Russia-Georgia
11.10.03 .....Switzerland-Rep Ireland

GROUP 10

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Switzerland	3	2	1	0	7	3	7
Russia	2	2	0	0	8	3	6
Albania	2	0	1	1	2	5	1
Rep Ireland	2	0	0	2	3	6	0
Georgia	1	0	0	1	1	4	0

- The 10 group winners qualify for the finals automatically; the 10 runners-up will play-off in five head-to-head, home and away ties, the winners of which also qualify.
- Qualifying play-off dates: Nov 15, 2003; Nov 19, 2003.
- Portugal qualify automatically for the finals as hosts.
- Finals tournament: opening match – June 12, 2004, in Oporto; Final – July 4, 2004, in Lisbon.



Nowhere to hide...a sombre Joan Gaspart hangs his head as he bears the brunt of abuse from Barcelona fans after the 3-0 home defeat by Sevilla

Gaspart rides out the storm

Sid Lowe reports on the trials and tribulations of the Barcelona president

NOT for the first time, the month's most dramatic scenes were at Camp Nou, where one man again seemed to stand alone against the world. Not Luis Figo this time, but Barcelona president Joan Gaspart, whose stoicism provided one of the most stunning pieces of television footage ever seen.

Two weeks before Christmas, Barcelona slumped to a 3-0 home defeat by Sevilla, confirming the club's worst ever start to a season and one that left them just two points off the relegation zone. The Barça fans' reaction was inevitable. When Mariano Toedtli scored Sevilla's second, they turned to Spanish football's classic gesture of disgust: the *panolada*. Suddenly, everyone in the stadium was turned towards the directors' box, waving their hankies and chanting "*Dimision, dimision!*" ("Resign! Resign!").

But it was at the final whistle, by which time Barça had conceded a third, that Gaspart gave his dramatic performance of intense, but understated, human emotion. With the fans again screaming abuse, he literally faced his fate – live on zoomed-in, super close-up television.

Rather than hide, the Barça president stood motionless before 50,000 hanky-wielding *cules*. But while he actually did nothing, his face said it all. A broken man close to tears, Gaspart appeared to be taking one last look at Camp Nou as if he was trying to make a final, defiant gesture of dignity.

One by one, Barça's directors encouraged him to leave, to escape the stinging lashes of the crowd, but he refused, pushing them away. He insisted on standing absolutely alone, accepting the ire of the *socis* (members) during what seemed like an age but was closer to five minutes.

"I wanted the *socis* to have their say, to be able to vent their spleen – and I'm the one who's responsible," Gaspart explained a few days later.

When the president did finally make his way inside, Canal Plus reporter Josep Pederol was waiting to ask if he would be resigning. Stony-faced, Gaspart ignored him, but the club did announce that he would make a statement later. At 1am, with the wait increasing the drama, Gaspart reappeared, only to declare that he wasn't going anywhere. Nor would he be sacking his coach, Louis Van Gaal.

Gaspart did, though, promise a meeting at which fans could tell him what they thought, which was rather an odd decision as he already knew: a series of polls suggested that over 90 per cent wanted him to resign and take Van Gaal with

him, while over 150 supporters' clubs had called for him to leave. The following day's sports newspapers all led on the same headline *"Dimision!"*

It looked like being a miserable Christmas in Catalonia. Van Gaal, who emphatically burned his bridges when he last left Barcelona, has been up against it from the start and so far has failed to win back the fans (against Sevilla he was booed every time he ventured off the bench), while Gaspart appeared to be hanging by a thread, especially when vice-president Joan Castells resigned.

And yet both men made it through Christmas and with some breathing space. Barça's efforts to find a new manager collapsed when Argentinian Carlos Bianchi decided to return to Boca Juniors, while the anti-Gaspart *Alternativa Blaugrana* grouping failed to collect sufficient signatures to force a motion of censure on the president.

And then there was the on-field up-turn: Barça defeated Mallorca 4-0 three days before Christmas, came back from their holidays raring to go and imparted a 3-0 hammering on Recreativo Huelva.

Barcelona's players weren't the only ones welcoming the holidays after a season-best 39 goals were scored on the first weekend of 2003. Only Rayo Vallecano's 1-0 win at Osasuna produced fewer than three as all over the country the fans celebrated *Reyes* (King's Night) with a goal-fest.

The New Year's biggest match was at the Bernabeu where it was, according to the Spanish press, *"Campeones contra Champions"* – Real Madrid versus Valencia. On a nigh-on waterlogged pitch, Madrid racked up their fifth successive victory and closed to within three points of the season's surprise – and still undefeated – leaders, Real Sociedad.

It was, said coach Vicente del Bosque, "our best performance so far". Madrid were impressive, but they ultimately needed the help of referee Pino Zamorano to secure the victory their performance deserved. Valencia playmaker Pablo Aimar was harshly sent off at 1-1 just as his side were starting to get into the game. Zamorano had booked the Argentinian 10 minutes before for what looked like an accidental collision with Iker Casillas, and then gave him a second yellow for what he interpreted, rather rigorously, as a "stamp" on Michel Salgado.

The red card changed the game, with Madrid taking control and eventually running out comfortable 4-1 winners. Afterwards, Valencia president Jaime Orti and full-back Amedeo Carboni both accused Salgado of "acting like he was in the theatre", while the pro-Valencia press was quick to see the old demons: "Robbery in Madrid!" screamed the front page of *SuperDeporte*.

While the sending off occupied the Valencian press, back in Madrid they were more interested in Ronaldo and Zinedine Zidane. The Brazilian striker opened the scoring with his first Bernabeu goal since his debut back in October and immediately won over the (until now sceptical) crowd with his celebration: avoiding his team-mates, Ronaldo ran to the bench to embrace Del Bosque, whose mother had passed away the previous day.

But Ronaldo was not the only star performer. Roberto Carlos turned in a quite awesome display and in the first half produced an impossibly powerful shot from a frankly insane angle which came whooshing back off the bar before anyone had even seen it leave his foot.

And then there was Zidane, who, despite the pitch, was sensational. He made the first goal for Ronaldo, scored the second and laid on the fourth for young substitute striker Javier Portillo. It was Portillo's first at the Bernabeu, but the talk was of Zidane, who had set it up with a marvellous flick, run, step-over and pass. "Zidane produced two works of art," said Portillo, "and then just gave me the ball and said 'go on, you score'."

Ronaldo was also quick to credit the Frenchman. "Zizou," he said, licking his lips, "was delicious." The greatest compliment, though, came from Madrid daily *As*. "Di Stefano is back," read its front cover, taking as its lead the comments of six-times European Cup winner Paco Gento, who claimed Zidane is "even more spectacular than Don Alfredo".

Almost as "spectacular" as Atletico Madrid president Jesus Gil y Gil, in fact. Gil spent the first days of the new year in hospital having a pacemaker fitted. Thoughtfully, his players decided to put the new equipment to the test in a dramatic 4-3 defeat by Villarreal.

Not that Gil appreciated the gesture. "It was an absolute disgrace," he ranted in a radio interview. "Every time we play, we play with seven." Even the interviewer's reminder that it wasn't a good idea to get so worked up, given his heart trouble, didn't stop him. "I'm sick of people telling me to relax – they can stick my heart where the sun don't shine! Carreras, Santi and Otero are not good enough for this team. And anyone who doesn't like that can die!"

Otero's response? "Well, I'm glad the pacemaker's all charged up and working well."

Finally, there's more good news for an ex-Spain coach: this time, Javier Clemente, who is back in work at Espanyol. But despite starting with victory over Valladolid, Clemente's side remain second bottom after 16 games. It's going to be a long haul.

Just as it is for 22-year-old Athletic Bilbao midfielder, Carlos Gurpegi, who tested positive for the banned steroid nandrolone. Gurpegi has denied the charges and has the support of the club, but, if found guilty, he faces a lengthy ban.

Zizou masterclass...Zidane was sensational in Real Madrid's 4-1 defeat of champions Valencia

Cucho makes his mark

Argentinian midfielder who has finally established himself in Real Madrid's first team

ANY doubts about the class and quality of young Argentinian midfielder Esteban Cambiasso were wiped away in the closing stages of Real Madrid's centenary match against a FIFA World XI.

Madrid's many substitutes had hit back twice from 3-0 down and were tracing pretty patterns around the Estadio Bernabeu in search of a diplomatic equaliser. The 'Eriksson' nature of the comings and goings between pitch and bench had not assisted cohesion and teamwork, so it was clear it would take an individual effort to balance the scoreline.

Right on cue with four minutes remaining, Cambiasso took possession outside the World penalty box, sent two defenders the wrong way and curled a left-footer around keeper Albano Bizarri and inside a post.

It was a goal confirming all the progress Cambiasso has achieved in the past half-season – his first as a senior at Madrid since the 1996 transfer that made such big headlines both in Spain and Argentina.

The fuss was not because the fee rivalled the world records that Madrid splashed out on the likes of Luis Figo, Zinedine Zidane and Ronaldo. Quite the reverse. Madrid signed Cambiasso for next to nothing but, then, he was only 15 at the time.

'Cucho' had not yet made his Argentinian top division debut, and fans in his home city of Buenos Aires were infuriated that one of their potential new heroes could be whisked away before they had even enjoyed his potential.

Madrid were accused of cradle-snatching. But since, below the age of 16, the player was not old enough to sign a professional contract, the deal had been arranged by his father, who had, in effect, been guarding the cradle.

Now the kid around whom such a storm blew up has emerged as one of the key figures at Madrid. However brilliantly may shine the haloes of Zidane, Figo, Raul and Ronaldo, they still need someone to dig in and win the ball before they can work their magic.

Fact file

Club Real Madrid (Spa)
Country Argentina
Born August 18, 1980, in Buenos Aires
Previous clubs Argentinos Juniors, Independiente (loan), River Plate (loan)
International debut December 2000, v Mexico
International caps 1 (0 goals)

Cambiasso started to kick a ball in childhood earnest with Argentinos Juniors of Buenos Aires, where Diego Maradona began his career. His energy and skill quickly attracted the Argentinian federation's youth-scouting programme, and it was while on national junior duty that he was spotted and recommended to Madrid.

Before Argentinos Juniors or the federation knew what had happened the deal had been done. Cambiasso duly flew to Madrid with his father and goalkeeping brother – who also joined Real as part of the deal.

The club were disconcerted by the publicity, and so was Cambiasso. He was tucked away in the youth and nursery teams in the Spanish Second and Third Divisions for two seasons but the level of expectation and homesickness proved a double handicap to his progress.

In the autumn of 1998 Madrid loaned him back to Independiente and he made his Argentinian League debut as a substitute in a 2-2 draw at Ferrocarril Oeste. Cambiasso spent two seasons with Independiente but Real decided he was not yet ready for the cut and thrust of La Liga. Thus he stayed another 18 months in Argentina, this time with River Plate – the great Alfredo Di Stefano's original club.

Twelve goals in 37 games last spring for River brought Cambiasso to the fringe of the Argentina World Cup squad, but coach Marcelo Bielsa preferred to stick with his experienced players – and may later have regretted overlooking the youthful zest and creativity that Cambiasso could have brought to a highly disappointing effort in the Far East.

Last summer, Madrid sports director Jorge Valdano and coach Vicente Del Bosque discussed how best to progress with Cambiasso. They wanted to introduce him to European football and had received enquiries from Benfica and Alaves, who both wanted to take him on loan. Madrid were tempted by the Alaves option: it would have offered Cambiasso La Liga experience and a chance to adjust his game. Simultaneously, however, Madrid were also trying to offload players to lighten the payroll. Out went Aitor Karanka and Ivan Campo and, suddenly, Valdano and Del Bosque realised they were looking thin in central defence. The easy answer was to switch Ivan Helguera back from midfield – but then who could do his job?

The answer was staring them in the face. Cambiasso had the ability and verve, all he needed was experience and self-confidence. Thrown in from the start, he quickly set about seizing his opportunity with both hands. To the delight of Del Bosque and Valdano, and to the public approval of team-mates Fernando Hierro and Michel Salgado, he proved himself utterly unfazed – shouting commands and instructions as readily to Zidane and Raul as he did to new young full-back Raul Bravo.

Off the pitch, it has been a different story. "I try to keep a low profile," he says. "It's enough to do my talking out on the pitch. If my team-mates think I am doing a good job that's all that matters."

Cambiasso's freshness has contrasted notably with the fatigued approach of some of his team-mates who went to the World Cup. In that sense, missing out worked to his advantage. "The Argentinian League finished early because of the World Cup," says Cambiasso, "so I had two months away from competitive football. I relaxed for a month, then worked on my fitness on my own. I think it's paid off – though I honestly didn't expect to get a chance to establish myself in the team so soon."

Cambiasso's hero is Fernando Redondo, who anchored Madrid's Champions League victory over Valencia in 2000 and was then ruled out by injury for two years just after transferring weeks later to Milan. Critics compare Cambiasso with the young Redondo – but not Cambiasso himself. He says: "So far I have not achieved even one per cent of what Redondo achieved. And you won't catch me thinking, or saying, anything different. That's the way I am."

Keir Radnedge

We're in the money...Libyan shareholder Al Saad Gaddafi (centre) joins the Juventus squad as they celebrate their Italian Supercup win over Parma in Tripoli

Clubs look to Arab world

Paddy Agnew reports on the new ground being broken by Serie A's big hitters

ITALIAN football began the new year with an intriguing diplomatic experiment that may prove to be a sign of times to come. Three of its biggest clubs – Juventus, Milan and Lazio – all chose to use the extra-long, three-week end-of-year break to play exhibition games for Arab hosts in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Libya.

At a time of ever-increasing East-West, Islamic-Christian tensions, there is little doubt that Italian football struck a modest blow for cultural detente with a series of games against sides such as Egyptian club Zamalek (Lazio), Saudi side Al Ittihad (Milan) and an international All Stars XI in Abu Dhabi (Juventus).

However, lest you get the impression that the three Serie A clubs are about to be hired by the United Nations, it is only right to point out that their Middle East jaunts were prompted by more than philanthropic considerations. A reported match fee of £600,000 was the spur for all three clubs to head East.

The Arab connection with Italian football, of course, is nothing new. Early last year, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in effect put his son Al Saad on the board of Juventus when he purchased a 7.5 per cent shareholding in the Agnelli-controlled 'Old Lady'. Within another year, that Libyan interest in Juventus is expected to reach 12 per cent, making Gaddafi the second biggest shareholder.

Italy's geographical position in mid-Mediterranean at the very crossroads between Europe, Africa and Asia has always left it open to dialogue as well as cultural and commercial exchange with the Arab world. Milan's acting president, Adriano Galliani, who also happens to be the League president, is not alone when expressing the hope that Italian football will learn to make more of such commercial exchanges in the future, commenting: "This is the path to travel [to the Arab world]. After all, Italian football represents a strong draw. We might be in economic crisis but we're getting good results – just look at the Champions League this season. All the Serie A club presidents are agreed on the promotion of this project, taking our football to countries where it has a big following and where, obviously, there are untapped economic resources."

Remember, too, this year's Serie A season officially began in Tripoli, Libya, when Juventus beat Parma 2-1 in the Italian Supercup last August. That particular little jaunt earned both clubs around £450,000 while the Italian League picked up a £225,000 bonus for having agreed to export its seasonal curtain-raiser.

Lest anyone had forgotten just how badly Italian soccer needs money, Lazio served a timely reminder with the resignation in early January of president and erstwhile major shareholder, Sergio Cragnotti. The crisis that struck his Cirio food products company had threatened to bring Lazio down with it, leaving Cragnotti little option but to put the club up for sale and in the meanwhile bow out of their day-to-day management.

So far, no knight in shining shinpads has ridden over the hill to save Lazio, estimated on November 30 to be £60million in debt. Footwear millionaire Mario Moretti Polegatto and Parma owner Calisto Tanzo are the most recent in a growing list of illustrious and wealthy names to have turned them down.

For the time being, the club will be run by lawyer Ugo Longo, who already had a seat on the Lazio board and who has also defended the club's interests in the courtroom. Longo faces a difficult task since he will be required by the creditors to both find a new owner and to make short-term cash via the sales of key players during the January window. Yet, the more players he sells, the more difficult it may prove for Longo to find an owner willing to pick up a club whose annual running costs have been estimated at £100m.

Stefano Fiore, Yugoslav Dejan Stankovic, Argentinian Claudio Lopez and Dutch defender Jaap Stam are all the object of much market attention, and it will represent a minor miracle for the club if all four are still lining up in a Lazio strip by the beginning of February.

One of the sides who might yet profit from Lazio's problems are champions Juventus, believed to be especially interested in Stankovic. Yet Juve themselves could still be caught up in the major crisis that has hit Turin-based automobile giant Fiat, which, like Juventus, is part-controlled by the Agnelli family.

Last October, Fiat Auto, the world's 11th biggest car manufacturer but battling against declining sales, announced 8,100 lay-offs (a fifth of its Italian workforce) as part of a bitterly contested restructuring necessary to fend off a crisis that will see it lose upwards of £1.3billion this year.

Inevitably, you wonder if the troubles currently being experienced by the Agnelli family as they try to save (or advantageously sell off) their core car business will some day soon be passed on to Juventus. It hardly helps matters at either Fiat or Juve that 81-year-old Gianni Agnelli, the man most closely associated with the image of both club and company for much of the past 50 years, is desperately ill with prostate cancer.

Targeted...Lazio's Dejan Stankovic

Juventus vice-president Roberto Bettega, however, has been striving to reassure shareholders (remember, Juventus is a stock-market quoted company), saying recently: "We are a separate entity from Fiat, and from the economic viewpoint, it does not impinge on us. When Fiat was in crisis in the 1970s, things were different because at that time the club belonged to Fiat.

"Mind you, as someone from Turin, I'm all too aware of what is happening in my city and I hope that better days return soon. In the meantime, it will be a matter of honour for us to keep the name of Turin on the newspaper front pages and for positive reasons, too."

One of the players who has helped write some positive headlines for Juventus this season is Argentinian Mauro Camoranesi, 50 per cent purchased by Juventus from Verona last summer for £5m. Despite the unwelcome interest of other clubs, Juventus are likely to secure the other 'half' of Camoranesi before the end of January and probably for an extra £6.5m.

Such has been the quality of the midfielder's performances that he has prompted the interest of not just one but two national team coaches – Marcelo Bielsa of Argentina and Giovanni Trapattoni of Italy.

Of Italian lineage, but born and reared in Argentina, the uncapped Camoranesi could theoretically play for either country since he holds both passports.

Even though his first preference is obviously for Argentina, his agent Sergio Fortunato has not ruled out that he might in the end opt for Italy. Fortunato points out that Trapattoni has made no secret of his interest in "acquiring" Camoranesi, while Bielsa has been slow in discovering the Argentinian. If Camoranesi does eventually opt for Italy, he could find himself earning a first cap as early as the mid-February friendly with Portugal.

For my final thought, I am grateful to left-wing daily *L'Unita*, which calculated that by December 31, no fewer than 133 coaches (or almost one a day) had been sacked in Italy's Serie A, B, C and D divisions since the start of the season. Even if only three of those sacked come from Serie A and 11 from Serie B, these statistics hardly represent an ideal start to the new year.

Pro-file Antonio Di Natale

Empoli's Neapolitan forward flourishing in Serie A

A PENCHANT for doing 'aeroplane' goalscoring celebrations is not the only thing that unites Roma's Italy striker Vincenzo Montella and Serie A's latest attacking sensation, Antonio Di Natale of Empoli. They are also both diminutive, nimble forwards of proven goalscoring ability, as well as being good friends. The pair hail from the same district of Naples – Castel Cisterna – and both started their careers with Empoli.

The Tuscan club took Di Natale on as an apprentice after he struck four goals in 15 minutes during a trial game. If homesickness was a problem at first, 'Toto' had the perfect ally in Montella. "Vincenzo really helped me in those difficult moments when I missed my family," recalls Di Natale. "He explained to me that in football it is not enough to be good with the ball at your feet. You also have to be a serious professional off the pitch."

Montella and Di Natale soon went their separate ways, the former to Genoa and Sampdoria, Di Natale on loan in the Third and Fourth Divisions before returning to Empoli in the summer of 1999.

Everything finally fell into place for Toto last season. Usually lined up on the left side, his speed on the counter-attack, outrageous tricks and 16 goals were at the heart of the club's promotion to the top flight. He has continued to prosper in Serie A, eight goals in the first 10 matches prompting Italy boss Giovanni Trapattoni to pick the 25-year-old for the November friendly against Turkey in Pescara.

Although the new boy was forced to play in a rather unfamiliar role on the right flank, he did not put a foot wrong, never wasting a ball and always threatening with his verve and close control.

"If Di Natale hadn't been called up, it would have been one of the great injustices of football," declared Empoli coach Silvio Baldini. "His attitude is first class and he has immense qualities."

The all-important question is how much longer Baldini will have Di Natale in his team. Roma, Internazionale, Juventus, Milan and Parma, plus a number of Premiership clubs, are as keen on his skills as the value-for-money £13million price-tag.

"My present and immediate future is at Empoli," he says. "What matters most is our survival in Serie A, and we have started well. As for Italy, it all depends on me keeping up the good work with Empoli. I hope I will have more time with the national team. It was a magical experience meeting up with the big stars of Italian football."

And now he is one of them.

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club **Empoli**
Country **Italy**
Born **October 13, 1977, in Naples**
International debut **November 2002, v Turkey**
International caps **1 (0 goals)**

Complacency is Bayern's biggest threat

Coach Hitzfeld has given his League-leading side some home truths, writes Nick Bidwell

SIX points ahead of the rest at the winter break, Bayern Munich have history on their side as they seek to compensate for their premature Champions League elimination with another domestic League title.

Only once in the history of the Bundesliga has a team with such an advantage at the halfway point of the season failed to scoop the title – Schalke in 1971-72 – and it is hard to imagine the Bavarians imploding in a similar fashion during the spring.

Bayern hold all the aces. They will have no European distractions, new signing Sebastian Deisler should be back early in 2003 to offer more options in midfield after breaking his kneecap last spring, and their squad remains the strongest in the land despite key Bosnian wing-back Hasan Salihamidzic being out for the season with damaged cruciate ligaments.

More to the point, the self-belief that took such a battering in Europe has been restored by an excellent sequence of results in the Bundesliga. Five wins and a draw in their last six League games before the winter break was the perfect way to sign off from the old year; 533 minutes without conceding a goal underlined their defensive solidity.

Bayern boss Ottmar Hitzfeld realises complacency is his side's biggest enemy, and to avoid any over-confidence his New Year message to the squad was one of hard-hitting home truths rather than cosy platitudes from the fireside. The coach described the performances of Brazilian midfielder Ze Roberto as middling; England's Owen Hargreaves was told he must improve technically and that he would never be a playmaker – a response to the 22-year-old's demands to play in central midfield rather than on the right flank – while French right-back Willy Sagnol was informed he was playing to only 70 per cent of his potential.

Technical difficulties...Bayern's Owen Hargreaves

There was also an ultimatum for off-form Brazilian striker Giovane Elber, who has not scored since late October. "We want to see a hungrier Elber," said Hitzfeld. "Along with Kahn and Ballack he should be one of the axis we build the team around but he has to do more. He has a half-year to do it."

Clearly the idea is to keep everyone on their toes, an objective helped by the news that Bayern are already making plans for next season having completed deals to bring in Argentinian central defender Martin Dimichelis from River Plate and Wolfsburg left-back Tobias Rau.

Although third-placed Werder Bremen and Stuttgart (5th) have achieved more than anyone could have expected, staying power may be a problem for them. Realistically, the only team capable of pegging back Bayern are champions Borussia Dortmund, who lie second.

Of course, the *Dortmunder* have a substantial, six-point gap to close, but coach Matthias Sammer has a high-quality squad at his disposal and they still have to play host to Bayern in April. Beaten only twice this term, Borussia are one of those teams with the happy knack of grinding out results even when not playing well, and Sammer could only be encouraged by the return to form of midfielder Lars Ricken, not to mention the ever-improving marksmanship of Brazilian forward Ewerthon.

Hertha Berlin were among the most notable disappointments of the 'autumn championship'. The assumption had been that the capital city club would be pushing for a top-three spot after luring away highly rated Dutch coach Huub Stevens from Schalke over the summer. But instead of making a play for the Champions League, the erratic Hertha finished the year in only eighth place, 15 points behind Bayern.

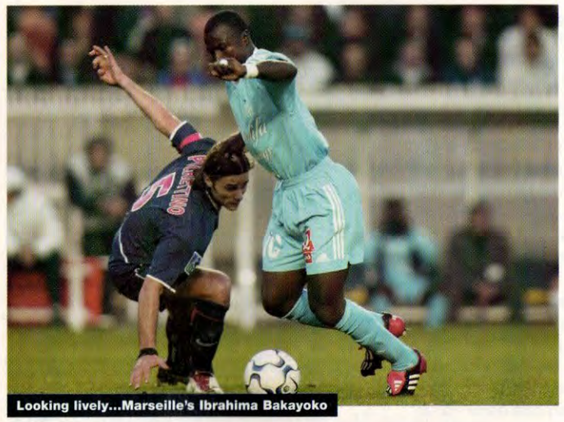
Apart from reaching the last 16 of the UEFA Cup, little has gone right for Hertha this term. Stevens dubbed a home record of just three League wins out of eight as "a catastrophe", while his team's attacking play has left much to be desired. Hertha managed only 19 goals in their first 17 League games, with Brazilian playmaker Marcelinho proving to be inconsistency itself, veteran striker Michael Preetz evidently past his prime and summer signing Luizao showing none of the talent that earned him a place in Brazil's World Cup squad, failing to register a single goal.

Bayer Leverkusen are another team desperate to reverse a slump, having gone from being Champions League and Bundesliga runners-up to relegation candidates in the space of a few months. Already beaten five times at home in the League, they were just four points off the drop zone at the turn of the year.

Coach Klaus Toppmoller has good reason to describe these troubled times as "the most difficult phase of my career". Leverkusen made far too many defensive errors in the first half of the season, with keeper Hans-Jorg Butt and Argentinian left-back Diego Placente being serial offenders. They rarely passed muster in attack, either, with World Cup forward Oliver Neuville looking jaded, new Brazilian striker Franca held back by injuries and Bulgarian Dimitar Berbatov turning the missing of chances into an art form.

To shore up the defence, 'Toppi' is counting on the imminent return to action of captain and centre-back Jens Nowotny following eight months out with torn knee ligaments. However, the coach will have to make do with what he has in attack, his appeal for a new striker meeting with a curt refusal from managing director Reiner Calmund.

Leverkusen are one of seven or eight clubs in the relegation mix, including Nurnberg, who have slipped into the danger zone after apparently forgetting how long a game of football lasts. They have conceded goals after the 75th minute in 10 games this season; without those late lapses, they would now be second in the table.


Looking lively...Marseille's Ibrahima Bakayoko

Top-placed Marseille take down-to-earth view

"THIS place as leaders doesn't interest us," avowed Marseille captain Frank Leboeuf when a win over Sedan put his team top of the table in December. "It doesn't signify anything concrete. I'm even going to reason in the Auxerre way – 34 points mean that we are almost safe."

Belt and braces stuff, you might well think, but perhaps caution in the case of Marseille is a goodish watchword. After all, there have been such steep ups and downs in recent seasons.

Midfielder Fabio Celestini has been much more enthusiastic. "There is great pleasure in being in the top three," he says. "I'm delighted, especially since it's my first year here. That gives me still more desire to play great matches here." Meanwhile, Ibrahima Bakayoko, the former Everton player, has been showing lively form up front.

There have been bleak moments, not least in late October when Paris Saint-Germain blew OM away 3-0 at Parc des Princes. Coach Alain Perrin said he felt ashamed after that game, but by December he was a great deal happier. "You cannot see anything as concrete when you know the fragility of a team during a season of football, with the injuries and the ups and downs of a group," he asserted. "You never know what tomorrow will bring, but you do have the satisfaction of this good, intermediate time."

Gernot Rohr, coach of newly promoted Nice, never did expect his side's sensational start to the season to last. "By definition," he states, "an exceptional state of spirit cannot last eternally. We know that in June we shall have to rebuild the team. But as we are all conscious of this, it makes the story more intense and more beautiful. It's like a love story when you know it must end soon, but that you want to live right to the end."

So a defeat like the 4-0 drubbing suffered away to Bordeaux in mid-December is clearly taken philosophically by Rohr, consoled by the fact that his team were still second in the table at the turn of the year against all expectations. Survival was really all the coach looked for at the season's start, and that is surely well achieved.

Though French football continues to throw up plentiful young natural talent, it cannot be denied that the emphasis on French stars is across the Channel in England. Whether it be the lively teenage attacker David Bellion at Sunderland, Manchester United's Mickael Silvestre, publicly critical of the strength of the squad, Olivier Dacourt, still more publicly scathing about what's wrong with Leeds United, or Nicolas Anelka, in rich scoring form for Manchester City.

Given all that, it is surprising the French championship retains so much of its appeal.

Andre Duclos

Pro-file Ailton

Prolific Werder forward proving hard to manage

THE management at Werder Bremen are never quite sure whether to laugh or cry at the thought of their Brazilian Ailton.

One might expect a player who has scored 55 League goals in the past three and a half seasons to be loved by all at the Bundesliga side. But not in this instance. While coach Thomas Schaaf and general manager Klaus Allofs rate the barrel-chested striker's speed, strength on the ball and ferocious left-footed shooting, they are less enamoured with what they regard as his unprofessionalism – poor time-keeping, lackadaisical approach and aversion to authority.

Certainly, Ailton, who arrived at Werder from Mexican side Tigres UNL in 1998, has been pushing his luck this season, arriving four days late for pre-season training, often going through the motions in practice and looking totally disinterested in some League games.

As the Bundesliga's top marksman with 13 goals up to the winter break, he should be an automatic selection at Werder. So it speaks volumes for his unreliability that he has been dropped no fewer than four times this term. Allofs believes short, sharp shocks are the only way to jolt Ailton into life. After watching a soporific display from the Brazilian in the first half of a recent game against Kaiserslautern, the general manager was reported to have angrily confronted Ailton. The verbal attack seemed to bear fruit, with Ailton scoring twice after the break as Werder turned a 3-1 deficit into a 5-3 win.

Not that Ailton was going to give Allofs any credit, saying: "I didn't score twice because of his criticism. More important was that the whole team played better in the second half. Allofs should know that I score goals for me, my family and my team. Not for him."

Needless to say, Ailton is unlikely to see out his contract with Werder, which runs until summer 2004. Of the prospective buyers, Bayer Leverkusen are reportedly very enthusiastic, and the Brazilian himself seems to be preparing the ground for a move. "I'm now 29 and with my next contract being the last of my career, everything must be right. I feel I'm good enough to go to a big club and always be sure of my place in the team. I'm confident that I'm one of the top three strikers in the Bundesliga. If I was stronger in the air, I would be the perfect striker.

"No way have I given up on playing for Brazil. I have had positive signals from the CBF that I could be called upon in 2003. In Brazil I'm a big theme on TV and in newspapers." He is making headlines in Germany too.

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Werder Bremen (Ger)
Country Brazil
Born July 19, 1973, in Migelra
Previous clubs Mogi Mirim, Santa Cruz FC Recife, Guarani, Tigres UNL (Mex)
Honours German Cup 1999

Staying alive

Shrewsbury maintain the magic of the FA Cup by knocking out Everton. Gavin Hamilton reports

THE FA CUP continues to cast its magic spell on the English game, despite the best efforts of administrators to further weaken the traditions of the world's oldest cup competition.

Although the Football Association won some plaudits for returning the Cup draw to its traditional spot at 1pm on a Monday, any goodwill was undone by the announcement that the rebuilt Wembley will host all future FA Cup semi-finals. The move was a bid to improve the financial viability of the Wembley project, but it rankled with many fans, particularly those with first-hand memories of semi-final matches at the likes of Old Trafford, Villa Park or Hillsborough.

Fortunately, the third round of this season's competition demonstrated that, on the pitch at least, the Cup's great traditions have been preserved. Seven Premiership teams failed to make it to the fourth round. The biggest giantkillers of the round – indeed for many years – were Shrewsbury, 18th in the Third Division, who beat Everton, fifth in the Premiership, 2-1 at Gay Meadow.

Nigel Jemson, once of Nottingham Forest and Sheffield Wednesday, scored both Shrewsbury goals, the winner coming a minute from time to delight manager Kevin Ratcliffe, who was captain of Everton during the trophy-laden 1980s.

An additional irony – that Everton manager David Moyes was a Shrewsbury stalwart during his playing career – was not lost on the home crowd, who berated the BBC for not choosing the game as its live transmission. Instead, the BBC, who had been running an advertising campaign that stressed the Cup's tradition for shocks, chose to cover the all-Premiership ties between Southampton and Tottenham and Manchester City and Liverpool.

The most dramatic tie of the third round was between Wolves and Newcastle, a blistering, heart-stopping 3-2 win for the First Division side.

The Christmas and New Year period proved highly productive for defending League champions Arsenal. They beat Middlesbrough, West Brom and, most significantly, Chelsea, and picked up a point from a controversial 1-1 draw with Liverpool. Arsenal's equaliser, a Thierry Henry penalty, attracted the wrath of Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier, who was incensed by what he saw as a dive by Arsenal striker Francis Jeffers.

The draw continued Liverpool's dismal run of form. They were without a League win in 10 games having tumbled from top spot, four points clear of Arsenal in early November, to seventh, behind Southampton at the turn of the year.

The reasons for Liverpool's malaise have been greatly debated but their cause has not been helped by a combination of injuries to key players such as Didi Hamann and loss of form suffered by the likes of Steven Gerrard.

In contrast, Gordon Strachan has done an impressive job since joining Southampton in October 2001. He has fashioned a hard-working team whose football is delighting the crowds at the new St Mary's stadium, while the goals of League top scorer James Beattie have given the Saints genuine hope of challenging for a European place.

The battle for top spot looks to be between Arsenal and Manchester United despite United's defeats by Blackburn and Middlesbrough over the festive period. Alex Ferguson was able to welcome back Roy Keane and Rio Ferdinand from injury, at the expense of Phil Neville and Wes Brown, who had been impressive deputies.

Chelsea had the chance to challenge Arsenal over the holiday period, but blew it, losing 3-2 to the leaders on New Year's Day having gone down 2-0 at Leeds four days before. The latter game included a wonderful goal by James Milner, the latest teenager to have praise, and great expectations, heaped upon him.

The competition for Champions League places may help to explain why many of the Premiership's wealthiest clubs have been taking the League Cup more seriously this season. Only one Premiership player, Aliou Cisse of Birmingham, travelled to Madrid to play for the World XI against Real. The midweek game coincided with the League Cup quarter-finals, for which Manchester United and Liverpool both fielded strong sides.

Both were successful – Liverpool thanks to a dramatic last-minute goal from Danny Murphy in a 4-3 win over Aston Villa – and the prospect of a United-Liverpool Final is now a strong possibility.

Gem of a winner...Nigel Jemson (blue shirt) watches his header beat Everton goalkeeper Richard Wright to give Shrewsbury a day to remember

Back to Denmark...Ebbe Skovdahl

SCOTLAND

Skovdahl done with the Dons

AS 2002 drew to a close, Aberdeen manager Ebbe Skovdahl finally decided to accept defeat and acknowledge he could take the club no further. The likeable Dane, having spent four years trying to improve the fortunes of the Dons, who have not won a major trophy since 1996, returned to his native country having failed to achieve his objective.

Skovdahl has been replaced by Steve Paterson, who has joined from First Division leaders Inverness Caledonian Thistle and will be assisted by former Aberdeen striker Duncan Shearer.

Former Hearts idol John Robertson has filled the vacancy at Inverness, having served a two-year managerial apprenticeship at Livingston under the guidance of the highly experienced Jim Leishman and David Hay.

Robertson helped guide Livingston into the Premier Division but cannot repeat the feat at Inverness, even if, as seems likely, they finish top. The club will be denied promotion because their stadium, built on the banks of the Moray Firth just outside the city, does not meet Premier League requirements – an all-seated, all-covered ground with a capacity of at least 10,000.

The Premier League closed down for the winter following the New Year games, with Rangers having opened up a three-point gap on Celtic at the top and both more than 20 points clear of third-placed Hearts. Rangers took the upper hand after beating their Glasgow rivals 3-2 at home in the second Old Firm League clash of the season. However, they then suffered their first League defeat, 1-0 away to lowly Motherwell, to allow Celtic to make up ground. The result completed a remarkable double for Motherwell, who had inflicted Celtic's first defeat of the season back in September.

However, Celtic could only draw 1-1 at Aberdeen on January 2 to allow Rangers, 3-1 winners over Dundee, to surge ahead again.

Alan Fairley

WALES

TNS hold half-time lead

TOTAL NETWORK SOLUTIONS led the Premier League at the halfway point of the campaign, with a three-point advantage over defending champions Barry Town and two games in hand. Bangor City and Afan Lido were 12 points off the pace in joint third.

TNS have hardly been pretty to watch, but remained unbeaten after 17 games, conceding just six goals.

Barry's title challenge has been bolstered by the arrival of John Fashanu as chairman. The former Wimbledon forward is aiming to field promising players from his native Nigeria at the club, raising the prospect of lucrative income should they attract moves to English sides.

Bangor City have welcomed back Marc Lloyd-Williams, Europe's top scorer last season with 47 goals, after he failed to make an impact at English Conference club Southport.

Mel Thomas

N IRELAND

Portadown back on track

GLENTORAN'S 13 League game winning run was ended in early December by champions Portadown – the only team to have already beaten them this season.

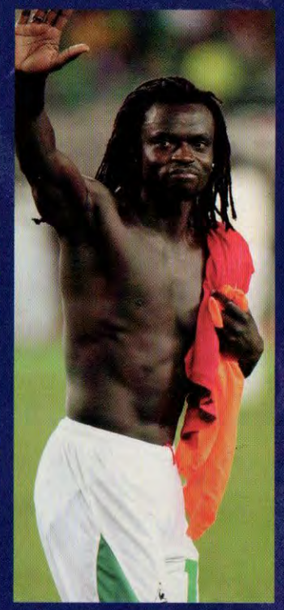
Victory put Portadown back on track to challenge for the title, which at the turn of the year looked a two-horse race, with third-placed Coleraine a long way back.

Glentoran won the first trophy of the season, beating traditional rivals Linfield 2-0 to lift the CIS Cup with goals from Michael Halliday and Andy Smith.

Roy Kitson

Pro-file Ferdinand Coly

Birmingham's new boy who became a star with Senegal



FERDINAND COLY is not your average footballer. The Senegal right-back, who left his native Senegal at the age of seven to move to France, slipped through the French detection system all but unnoticed.

As he entered his twenties the dreadlocked defender, who was working in local government following a year studying psychology at university, had all but given up on making it in the professional game. Since then, Coly's rise has been as starry as Senegal's.

After spells at Chateauroux and Lens, and an international career that has encompassed an African Nations Cup Final and a World Cup quarter-final, Coly finally secured his long-held dream: a move to England.

Newly promoted Birmingham City, already with Senegal captain Aliou Cisse in their ranks, managed to secure the signature of the much-coveted Coly, but it took some manoeuvring on his part to secure the cross-channel ticket.

"I told [Lens manager] Joel Muller before the transfer window that I wasn't going to sign a new contract, so he decided not to play me," says Coly. "After that, the club were prepared to let me go earlier than June, when my contract runs out, so it did speed up my departure. Birmingham had wanted me for a long time, so when they offered me a six-month loan deal, with an offer of a contract if they stay up, I was happy to take it."

Birmingham weren't the only club chasing Coly's signature, so every time the Senegal players met up after the World Cup Cisse could be seen with his arm draped around his mate's shoulders, encouraging him to follow him to England's second city.

So what does Birmingham's new defender make of his new playground? "It's physical, but it is also very technical and you have to work really hard," says Coly. "I have a huge desire to do well here.

"After the World Cup, everyone looked at us Senegalese differently, and it gave us all a huge lift. It also means we have to redouble our efforts, to make sure we are worthy of the compliments. There are four of us now in England, and it is a physical championship that suits Senegalese players well."

At 29, most players are beginning to think about when their career will end. So will Birmingham be Coly's last club? "No, I don't think so," he says. "I came to football late, but I have several years left in the game. I don't know where that will be, but I have been a professional for eight years now, and I'm still learning and improving."

James Copnall

Fact file

Club **Birmingham (Eng)**
Country **Senegal**
Born **September 10, 1973, in Dakar**
Previous clubs **Chateauroux (Fra), Lens (Fra)**
International caps **24 (0 goals)**

Hiddink on top again

Klaas-Jan Droppert on yet more success for the PSV coach

HOLLAND

GUUS HIDDINK has followed up his amazing World Cup exploits with South Korea by leading PSV to the top of the Dutch League at the winter break. The Eindhoven club leapfrogged Ajax to take pole position when beating them 4-2 in mid-December at the Amsterdam ArenA.

One of the goals came from Mateja Kezman, who is clearly enjoying Hiddink's arrival. Last year the Yugoslav striker announced he would leave the club in order to play in Italy. Kezman had a difficult relationship with then coach Eric Gerets, whose rotation policy and reported lack of communication did the striker no good. He lost confidence and scored only a relatively modest 15 goals last season. Now with Hiddink showing confidence in him by giving him a regular start, Kezman has hit 18 goals already in just 17 matches.

Meanwhile, Hiddink, who won the European Cup with PSV during a previous spell in charge, has used his Korean connections to sign international midfielder Park Ji-sung from Japan's Kyoto Purple Sanga.

Ajax, two points behind PSV, have hired David Mendes Da Silva from Second Division Sparta, who have been forced to sell off players because of a financial crisis. At the same time, Ajax coach Ronald Koeman has told veteran midfielder Aron Winter that he should quit rather than end his impressive career on the bench.

The FA has announced it is to take much firmer control of the expenditure of clubs in financial difficulties. From next season, an FA supervisor will have to approve every amount higher than £6,500 that such clubs want to spend. This should prevent similar cases to those involving NAC Breda, Utrecht and Vitesse Arnhem, who have racked up enormous debts in recent years. Vitesse's plight was not helped by their UEFA Cup exit at the hands of Liverpool.

Flying in...Mateja Kezman is in fine goalscoring form

Dismissal...Aruna Dindane

BELGIUM

Debt-ridden Mechelen face demotion

KV MECHELEN are the latest club to be engulfed by Belgian football's on-going financial crisis. The newly promoted outfit have gone into administration following hard on the heels of Eendracht Aalst, who went into administration last season, and RWDM, who have now folded.

Mechelen say they need to raise about £650,000 by the end of January just in order to complete their campaign in the First Division, with fans being asked to fork out £2,000 in exchange for a seat on the new board. However, the club are already resigned to being reacquainted with Aalst in the Third Division next season. Clubs are automatically demoted to that division, the highest amateur level, when refused a professional licence because of financial problems.

Mechelen compounded their difficulties by spending heavily on players during the summer in an attempt to ensure a successful return to the top flight after winning the Second Division championship.

Coach Stephane Demol, who only arrived in the close season, has now jumped ship to be succeeded by his assistant, Alex Czerniatynski, like Demol a former Belgian international.

Club Brugge's UEFA Cup exit at the hands of Stuttgart left Anderlecht, 4-2 aggregate victors over Bordeaux, as Belgium's only representatives in Europe.

Anderlecht were also showing good form in the League as it shut down for the winter, moving into second place behind Club Brugge with a 7-1 thrashing of Beveren. Their triumph was tarnished, though, by the controversial dismissal of Aruna Dindane. In trying to explain to the referee that he had been elbowed, Dindane struck the official, who considered, contrary to public opinion, that his action was deliberate.

In the Cup, Dindane's equaliser helped spare Anderlecht the indignity of a shock exit to Fourth Division KV Turnhout. An injury-time goal allowed the top division side to scrape through into the quarter-finals.

The main upset was at Genk, with the League champions going out on penalties to modest top-flight side La Louviere. League top scorer Wesley Sonck missed a spot-kick for Genk in extra-time. Ironically, the decisive penalty in the shoot-out was scored by ex-Genk favourite Domenico Olivieri, who has been promised a job by the club after he retires.

Nicholas Harling

SWITZERLAND

Wil at heart of financial scandals

FINANCIAL scandals have rocked Swiss football in the closing weeks of the year, with those involving FC Wil making the biggest splash.

Club president Andreas Hafen, a vice-director of Switzerland's largest bank, UBS, has admitted that since 1992 he had siphoned over £4million of private clients' investments into FC Wil's coffers. Martin Frey, the examining judge in the case, has been quoted as saying that Hafen also admitted making illegal cash payments to several players. These were also under investigation.

Wil won promotion to the top flight for the first time last season and qualified for next spring's eight-team championship play-offs by finishing fourth in the 22-round qualifying phase.

In its own investigation, the FA licensing committee claimed the club was late in submitting the required financial information, a situation that caused the case to be referred to the disciplinary committee. However, this handed out a fine of only £3,700 instead of the widely expected demotion.

Meanwhile, Young Boys president Heinz Fischer and sports director Fredy Bickel have been forced to resign after being charged by the club's majority shareholder with overstepping their statutory authority in player transfer deals with leading agent Peter Bozetti.

Teenage Servette defender Philippe Senderos, the captain of Switzerland's European Under-17 Championship-winning side, has opted to join Arsenal next season rather than Real Madrid, despite his father's preference for the latter move.

Ivar von Rulach

PORTUGAL

Guimaraes chief faces embezzlement charges

VITORIA GUIMARAES chairman Antonio Pimenta Machado has been released on bail after being charged with embezzlement and the forging of documents. The charges were made after Pimenta Machado had been questioned by police investigating the transfer of defender Fernando Meira to Benfica in August 2000.

The pending court case did not distract the Guimaraes players, who moved up to third place in the table with a 2-0 home win over Maritimo in the last game of 2002. The season's surprise package lay 10 points behind FC Porto, who were on a seven-game winning run. Benfica, six points behind the leaders in second, beat Lisbon rivals Sporting 2-0 away in early December to boost their title challenge. However, they will be without Angolan striker Pedro Mantorras for six weeks after he underwent knee surgery.

Sidelined...Pedro Mantorras

Academica, mired in the relegation zone all season, have installed former national coach Artur Jorge in the hotseat. His predecessor, Joao Alves, announced his resignation shortly before the entire club board stood down.

Alberto da Silva

AUSTRIA

League leaders splash out

AUSTRIA WIEN sports director Peter Svetits has been true to his word when he said his priority was to bring in as many talented young Austrians as possible. In an otherwise stagnant mid-winter transfer market, the runaway League leaders have already signed Bregenz midfielder or defender Patrick Pircher, striker Joachim Parapatits from Second Division Leoben and, in the biggest coup of all, Pasching's Austro-Turkish playmaker Volkan Kahraman.

The 23-year-old deservedly made his debut for Austria in the autumn after inspiring his newly promoted side to become the surprise package of the current top-flight campaign, and should have no trouble settling in at his new club. After all, he played for Austria Wien schoolboy sides between the ages of seven and 15. "Returning to Austria Wien was always my goal," said Kahraman. "This is my opportunity to make a name for myself. My aims are a place in the starting line-up, a League title and the chance to show what I can do in the Champions League."

Nick Bidwell

REP OF IRELAND

Dolan backed at St Pat's

ST PATRICK'S ATHLETIC manager Pat Dolan has received the full backing of chairman Andy O'Callaghan despite a dreadful run of results that left the team hovering around the relegation zone. "Sacking managers doesn't always work," said O'Callaghan. "We are obviously disappointed with our present situation considering the expectations we carried into the season. But the board's view is that a change of management is not the solution."

Dolan's prospects at the club were boosted when St Pat's recorded a vital 2-0 win against League leaders Bohemians over the Christmas period.

Shelbourne have been unable to play home games for several weeks after flooding damaged their Tolka Park ground.

Sean Creedon

Pro-file Christoph Daum

Former drugs-tainted coach rebuilding career at Austria Wien

TWO years after revelations of a cocaine habit cost him his job as Bayer Leverkusen coach and forced the German federation to abandon plans to hand him the reins of the national team, Christoph Daum has picked up the pieces and resurfaced at ambitious Austria Wien.

Club president Frank Stronach, a millionaire car dealer, has set his heart on his team competing in the Champions League, but despite spending heavily and consuming seven coaches in three years, the Holy Grail has remained as elusive as ever. Now he expects Daum to deliver.

The coach, who led Stuttgart to the German Bundesliga title in 1992, relishes the challenge. "I'm on the same wavelength as the management here," said Daum after signing a three-year contract last October. "They want to build something big here and so do I. I'm convinced Austria can become one of the best clubs in Europe."

Stronach's naked ambition was illustrated in the ruthless way he offloaded coach Walter Schachner earlier in the season after just three months in charge and with the team top of the League. The media were quick to ask why Schachner should be axed when he was doing so well to be replaced by a man with a dubious past and who had achieved little in his last job with Besiktas. "Who pays the bills, decides," Stronach retorted. "We can only aspire to the Champions League if we have the best players, the most experienced coach and the necessary finance. Christoph Daum is one of Europe's most successful coaches. Everyone makes mistakes in their life. When looking for someone to head your team, you pick an eagle rather than a chicken."

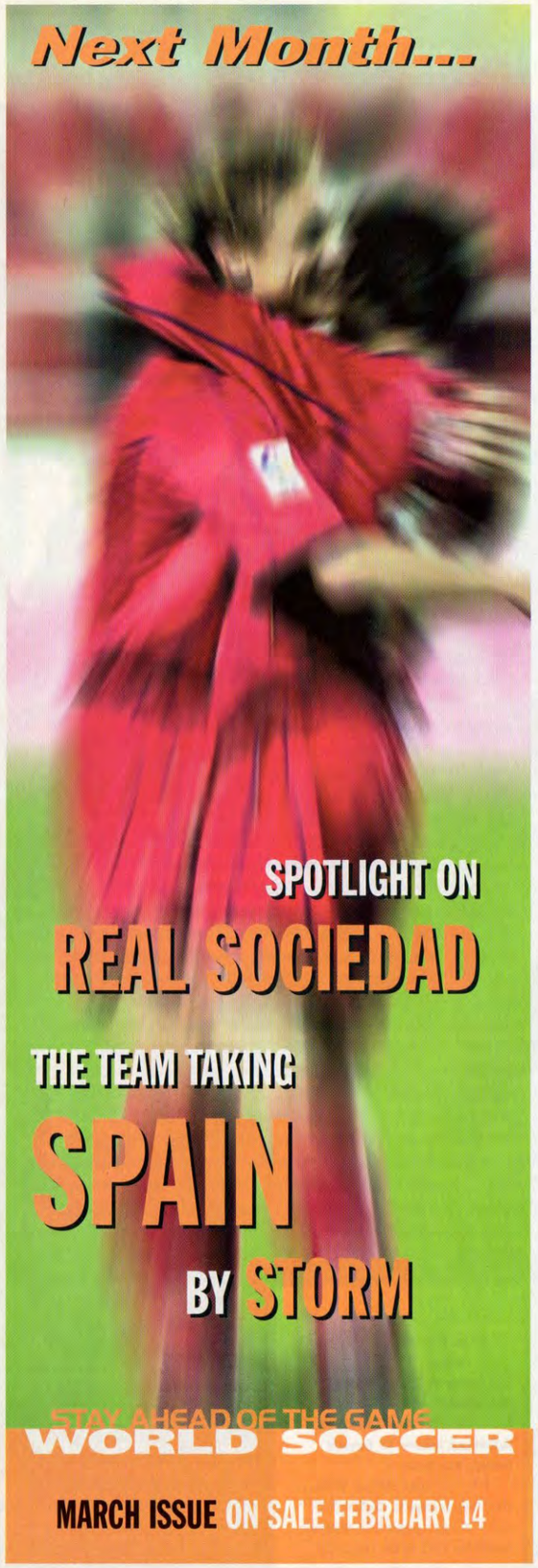
Domestically, Daum's appointment has been largely vindicated. Austria went into the winter break with a 13-point League lead. But a 3-0 aggregate loss to FC Porto in the UEFA Cup revealed the chasm that separates the club from their dreams of continental headway.

Despite the defeat, it is clear Daum has thrown himself into the job with gusto, though it is hard to believe he will not be tempted back to his native Bundesliga. Hardly a week goes by without him being linked with a top German side, no doubt prompted by the fact he emerged more or less unscathed from his trial for drug offences last year. Having faced losing his coaching licence if convicted, proceedings against him were dropped after he paid a £6,600 fine for illegal possession. Daum is free to go home. The only question is when.

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Austria Wien (Aut)
Country Germany
Born October 24, 1953, in Zwickau, East Germany
Playing career DJK Viktoria Beeck, VfB Ruhrort Laar, Hamborn 07, Eintracht Duisburg, Koln amateurs
Coaching career Koln, Stuttgart, Besiktas (Tur), Bayer Leverkusen, Besiktas (Tur)
Honours German League 1992 (Stuttgart); Turkish Cup 1994; Turkish League 1995



TT races off to Lyn

Brann fans are furious at their coach's departure. Sigurd Odegaard reports

Coming home...much-travelled Vidar Riseth has joined Rosenborg from 1860 Munich

NORWAY

TEITUR THORDARSSON has caused ructions at Brann Bergen by stepping down as coach and immediately joining Oslo side Lyn. Thordarsson had apparently weathered the storm caused by Brann's near relegation last season and seemed to have the support of the players and the board. However, he resigned after returning from a short post-season holiday because he was not happy with his future prospects in Bergen.

"The board has discussed the club's platform for next season and as I have not been involved in these discussions, I'm not satisfied with the role I have been given," he explained.

Brann fans were outraged when Thordarsson then joined Lyn, believing he had engineered the move long before deciding to leave.

New Rosenborg coach Aage Hareide has signed the highly experienced Vidar Riseth from 1860 Munich with the intention of using him as a central defender. However, Riseth's pace and versatility means he can be used in a variety of positions.

Former international Tore Pedersen, like Riseth an experienced traveller, has turned down the chance to join Nice after helping his home-town club Fredrikstad to promotion to the Norwegian top flight.

Former Norway coach Egil Olsen is back in the national team fold after accepting an offer to take charge of the Under-19 side.

DENMARK

Backe to the future at Copenhagen

FC COPENHAGEN'S tough coach Hans Backe has been rewarded with a new contract after leading Denmark's richest club to a commanding position in the Superliga. Backe signed to stay on until the summer of 2006 after Copenhagen went into the winter break nine points clear of the pack. The coach has a remarkable record since he took over 16 months ago, having lost only three of his 43 matches in charge.

Jon Dahl Tomasson was the clear winner of Denmark's Player of the Year award. The Milan forward, signed from Feyenoord in the summer, finished well ahead of second-placed Niclas Jensen, the Manchester City defender.

Two veteran Danes have announced their retirement. FC Midtjylland midfielder Jens Jessen was forced to quit with a knee injury, while Brondby goalkeeper Mogens Krogh decided it was time to hang up his gloves at the age of 39.

Jim Holden

SWEDEN

Council bails out Helsingborgs

A LOAN of £500,000 from the local city council means that debt-ridden Helsingborgs are set to play in next season's top flight after all. The club's presence was threatened because of their estimated £2million debt, which would have meant refusal of a top division licence under a new licensing system.

The club, League champions in 1999, are one of Sweden's few genuine crowd pullers, but got into financial difficulties after qualifying for the 2000 Champions League. "We signed many expensive players then gave them long-term contracts," says chairman Claes Johansson. "Those contracts have since become unrealistic."

AIK are searching for yet another coach – their fourth within a year – after Dusan Uhrin stepped down citing fatigue. Under the Czech, AIK were never in the hunt for the League title, and the Cup Final defeat by Double-winning neighbours Djurgardens was a particularly bitter blow.

Pentti Hietanen

FINLAND

Harkimo criticises domestic arrangements

FINANCIAL constraints have put the dampeners on the transfer market, with even promoted FC Jokerit, one of the more ambitious clubs, showing caution. Midfielder Konstantin Nahk from Estonian club Levadia Maardu is their only major signing to date.

However, Harry Harkimo, the man behind Jokerit, has been anything but quiet, continually slamming the Finnish game for its poor image.

"Finland is the only country in Europe where football is not the No 1 sport," Harkimo asserts. "This situation must change radically if we want to make any progress."

Worn out...Uhrin quit as AIK coach

Harkimo blames the League authorities for ineffectiveness. He says: "The directors and owners of the clubs shoulder the economic risks, yet they have not been given enough say in how the game should be run."

Pentti Hietanen

● With **ICELAND'S** domestic season now deep in hibernation, attention has focused on the transfer market, *writes Rab Christie*. Champions KR have proved the most active among the country's leading sides, and the club's ability to compete for the services of some of Iceland's best players may be partly explained by the revenue generated by their relatively large fan base.

Pro-file Jakup Mikkelsen

Faroese keeper who kept Germany at bay

ONCE a teacher, Faroe Islands keeper Jakup Mikkelsen passed all his examinations with flying colours in his country's Euro 2004 qualifier against Germany last October. He was outstanding that night in Hannover, repeatedly thwarting the World Cup runners-up with his reactions, speed off his line and calm authority. Although the Faroes were to unluckily lose 2-1 – striker Hjalgrim Elttoer hit a post near the end – at least 32-year-old Mikkelsen was overwhelming choice for Man of the Match.

Recognition at last. Although Mikkelsen has been a national team regular for the past four seasons, most fans outside the Faroes still tend to associate the goalkeeping position with the bobble-hatted Jens Martin Knudsen, a hero of the team's finest moment, a 1-0 home win over Austria in 1990. Knudsen is still in the national squad, but now as Mikkelsen's deputy.

"The Germany match was a wonderful experience, but not the best game I've ever played," says Mikkelsen, who began his career with the KI club in Klaksvik before playing in Denmark with Herfolge and current club Molde of Norway. "We were very motivated and perhaps Germany were not expecting such a tough match. We weren't overawed by the fact that we hadn't played in such a big stadium.

"Despite letting ourselves down in our defeat in Lithuania [2-0, four days earlier], we are generally happy with the way we have started the qualifiers. A 2-2 draw at home to Scotland and losing narrowly to Germany shows we are on the right road. We hope to give Germany a problem or two when they come to visit us.

"I'm pleased not just because I played well but also because I have Oliver Kahn's shirt. He is like a god to my seven-year-old son Paul and he will be thrilled to have the jersey of the world's best keeper."

Mikkelsen, one of only two professionals in the Faroes squad – the other is forward Christian Hogni Jacobsen – joined Molde in 2001 after six years with Herfolge. However, he is unlikely to remain there much longer. He is only reserve to Swede Eddie Gustafsson, and with the latter in excellent form last season, Mikkelsen must look elsewhere. There should be no shortage of buyers.

"Mikkelsen is a fantastic keeper but we have a problem in that he's not getting enough match practice with his club," says Faroes national coach Henrik Larsen, the former Denmark midfielder. "Hopefully, it will be remedied soon."

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club **Molde (Nor)**
Country **Faroe Islands**
Born **August 14, 1970, in Klaksvik**
Previous clubs **KI Klaksvik, Herfolge (Den)**
International debut **August 1997, v Estonia**
International caps **28**

Partizan hand Matthaus the reins

Vladimir Novak on the League leaders' surprise appointment as coach

YUGOSLAVIA

CHAMPIONS Partizan Belgrade have caused a sensation by appointing Lothar Matthaus as the coaching successor to Ljubisa Tumbakovic. The former Germany great is not only the first coach from Western Europe to take over a Yugoslav club, but he is also unproven as a coach, having only an unsuccessful eight-month spell at Rapid Wien last season to his name.

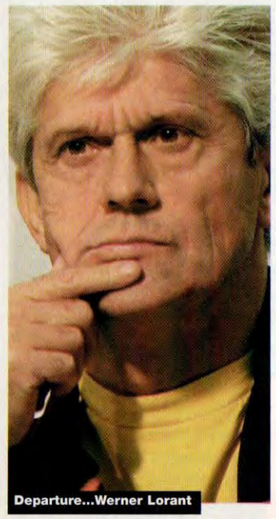
Despite this, Matthaus, 41, was handed an 18-month contract with Partizan, reportedly worth some £500,000.

"All my hopes are to be successful with Partizan," said Matthaus, whose immediate concern is to ensure that the club retain the Yugoslav championship. "After that, we will think about the Champions League. From June 2003 we will put together a strong team to try and play in the best continental competition."

Partizan sacked Tumbakovic despite the fact that they led the League at the winter break by nine points. He paid the price after assaulting a TV reporter during a press conference just a few days after Partizan had exited the UEFA Cup at the hands of Slavia Prague.

The national side, actually a B team, ended the year with a 2-1 win away against a selection from the Valencia region of Spain.

Welcome aboard...Matthaus (right) arrives at Partizan


Departure...Werner Lorant

TURKEY

Lorant leaves Fener

FENERBAHCE coach Werner Lorant has resigned after less than a year in charge following a poor run of results at home and in Europe. The German's future had been in doubt after the team had been eliminated from the UEFA Cup by Panathinaikos having failed to reach the Champions League first group phase. In the League, a 3-0 defeat at Diyarbakirspor proved the final straw.

Before he stepped down, Lorant had criticised the Fenerbahce board in the media, stating that he was not allowed to bring in players or the coaching staff he wanted.

His replacement is assistant Oguz Cetin, though he can only keep the job after the end of the season if he gains the required coaching certificate.

On the playing front, the career of Fenerbahce's 27-year-old Brazilian striker Washington hangs in the balance after doctors discovered he has a serious heart problem.

Washington's team-mate Tuncay Sanli made the headlines when he hit a hat-trick in Fenerbahce's 3-2 victory over Trabzonspor in the last match of the year. The attacking midfielder, one of the brightest prospects in Turkish football, has hit form after recovering from a shoulder injury, tormenting defences with his dribbling prowess and extreme pace.

Besiktas and Denizlispor both advanced to the fourth round of the UEFA Cup after beating Kyiv Dynamo and Lyon respectively.

Besiktas are also going well in the League, leading the table unbeaten at the winter break with a two-point lead over Galatasaray.

Hasan Cemali

GREECE

Final venue decided

A VENUE for the 2004 Olympics soccer Final has at last been agreed after several potential stadiums were rejected. The tournament decider will now take place in the Karaiskaki stadium, located in the Athens seaside suburb of Faliron.

On the coaching front, Dutchman Egen Gerard has been named as the replacement for Yugoslav Ivan Jovanovic at Iraklis.

Gerard was previously in charge of Cypriot side APOEL Nicosia, having stepped down after 15 years at Greece's OFI Crete following a heart attack. The 62-year-old's stint at OFI had made him Greece's longest-serving coach.

Jovanovic, a former Iraklis player, had been appointed only in May, but was fired after the club suffered three successive defeats.

Frenchman Jean-Michel Cavalli had an even briefer tenure at Ionikos, losing his job after only four months as the team continued to sink towards the relegation zone.

Cavalli, who joined Ionikos from Racing Club of Paris, has been replaced by former Poland coach Jacek Gmoch, recently at Kalamata.

Lou Economopoulos

CROATIA

2008 bid proves non-starter

CROATIA'S dismal 2002 on the field – only four wins from 11 matches and first-round elimination at the World Cup – was compounded by the country's failure to win hosting rights for the 2008 European Championship.

The joint bid with Bosnia-Herzegovina had never looked realistic given the countries' lack of suitable stadiums and infrastructure to host a major tournament. However, Croat federation president Vlatko Markovic and his Bosnian counterpart Jusuf Pusin had insisted the bid go ahead after claiming the European Union had offered to help as part of its programme to heal wounds in the war-scarred nations.

Despite the failed bid, Markovic was recently re-elected for four more years.

Zdravko Reic

SLOVENIA

Choppy waters as Pavlin joins Olimpija

OLIMPIJA went into the winter break two points clear at the top of the League but the year-end was marred by a spat between new loan signing Miran Pavlin and coach Brane Oblak.

The national team captain has been brought in from FC Porto to strengthen Olimpija's championship challenge, but it is well known there is bad blood between player and coach. Oblak made it clear that he has reservations about the signing, saying: "Pavlin has to prove himself."

Pavlin responded by saying: "I have played with success in stronger leagues than Slovenia's and I do not have to fear for my position in the team. Let the coach deal with his frustrations somewhere else."

Challenging words...Miran Pavlin

Olimpija's Croat midfielder Robert Prosinecki was named Slovenian Player of the Year.

Zdravko Reic

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Osim junior wins award

AMAR OSIM, the son of Sturm Graz coach and former Yugoslavia boss Ivica Osim, has earned recognition in his own right by winning the Bosnian Coach of the Year award for his work with Zeljeznicar. Amar led the side to the championship in 2001-02 and they are again among the front-runners this term.

Nenad Stojanovic, a forward with League leaders Leotar, was named Player of the Year by sports daily *Avaz*. The award is an indication of the greater integration within the Bosnian game since Stojanovic was born in Belgrade and until this season his club were restricted to playing in the Serb League within Bosnia.

A more remarkable example of the breaking down of barriers was the recent transfer of forward Veljko Aleksic from Serb side Glasinac to Zeljeznicar, a traditionally Muslim team. It was from Glasinac that Sarajevo was bombarded during the civil war, in particular the district of Grbavica where Zeljeznicar's stadium is situated.

Zdravko Reic

MACEDONIA

Hadziristeski takes top job

HARALAMPIE HADZIRISTESKI has been appointed federation president after beating his only rival for the post, Macedonian Player of the Century Darko Pancev, by 74 votes to 16.

After his victory, the former Pobeda Prilep president announced a campaign for a fairer domestic championship and the founding of independent associations for clubs, referees and players. The position became vacant after Lambe Arnaudov resigned under pressure from his federation colleagues, dissatisfied with his reforms programme.

Belasica midfielder Robert Popov has been named as the country's Player of the Year, while Dragan Kanatlarovski is the new coach of Pobeda following the dismissal of Zoran Smilevski. The national team finished the year with a 1-1 draw against a Basque selection in Bilbao.

Michel Stojmanovski

MALTA

Balearics beaten

A DEPLETED national team ran out 2-0 winners against a Balearic Islands selection in December, the first time a united team from Mallorca, Ibiza and Menorca had appeared. Goals from Adrian Mifsud and Noel Turner muted the celebrations inside RCD Mallorca's Son Moix stadium.

The big League game between leaders Sliema Wanderers and Birkirkara ended 3-3.

Domenico Aquilina

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Players march for unpaid wages

Jonathan Wilson on a protest that also has the backing of national coach Iordanescu

ROMANIA

MORE than 100 players marched through Bucharest on December 20 in protest at non-payment of wages and the corruption that is still rife in Romanian football.

"If you sign a contract you can never be sure it will be respected," said Steaua midfielder Iulian Miu, who was banished to the youth team last season for refusing to sign a new deal.

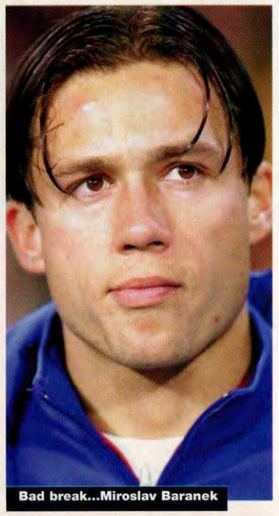
National coach Anghel Iordanescu backed the demonstration, which was largely directed at Dumitru Dragomir, chairman of the professional league, who was described by one banner as "Ceausescu the second".

"It is bad that such images are projected around the world, but the players are right," said Iordanescu. "The chairmen must understand that they have to pay the players, and not make them a part of their dirty deals."

Others were less convinced. "These guys earn £25,000 a year," said Brasov president Ioan Neculaie. "If they want to complain, they must also take with them the doctors and the teachers, who earn maybe £2,000."

Ajax captain Cristian Chivu, who held off the challenge of Parma striker Adrian Mutu to win Romania's Player of the Year award, admitted this is likely to be his last season in Holland. He said: "I have had some splendid times at Ajax, but the time is right for a change."

Paying the price...contract rebel Miu was dropped to Steaua's youth team


Bad break...Miroslav Baranek

CZECH REPUBLIC

'Loser' Kotrba wins Sparta job

JIRI KOTRBA is the new coach of League leaders Sparta Prague following the departure of Jozef Jarabinsky, whose long-ball tactics did not go down well with the fans. Remarkably, Kotrba was appointed having been in charge of Sigma Olomouc for just four matches, all defeats. Earlier in the season, Kotrba resigned from Marila Pribram after the side lost their first two matches of the campaign.

Ironically, his replacement at Pribram was former national coach Jozef Chovanec, favourite to fill the Sparta vacancy until his current club's compensation demands became clear.

Petr Ulicny left Hradec Kralove to replace Kotrba at Olomouc, with Leos Kalvada, formerly with Slovak champions MSK Zilina, coming in for Ulicny.

Sparta face problems up front. Miroslav Baranek is likely to miss the rest of the season after breaking a leg in a car crash, while Libor Sionko is sidelined with a knee injury. However, the defence has been boosted by the return of Slovakia defender Vladimir Labant after an unhappy year at West Ham.

Slovan Liberec went out of the UEFA Cup 3-2 on aggregate to Panathinaikos, leaving Slavia Prague 4-1 winners over another Greek side, PAOK Salonika, as the country's sole representatives in Europe.

Roy Kitson

RUSSIA

Loskov takes top award

LOKOMOTIV MOSCOW captain Dmitri Loskov has been named Russian Player of the Year shortly after scoring the goal that brought his side their first League title.

The 28-year-old finished well ahead of his two nearest challengers – goalkeeper team-mate Sergei Ovchinnikov and CSKA Moscow playmaker Sergei Semak.

The award capped a marvellous season for midfielder Loskov, who scored the only goal of the domestic championship play-off against CSKA in November and led the side to a famous 2-2 draw at Real Madrid in the final Champions League group game before the winter break.

Zenit St Petersburg's new coach Vlastimil Petrzela has become the first in the Russian League to need an interpreter to talk to his players. On arrival, the 49-year-old Czech announced his intention to change the team's style of play, bringing it closer to "the English model".

Two other 'foreigners' have also been appointed by top-level sides, though Revaz Dzodzuashvili of Georgia (Alaniya Vladikavkaz) and Sergei Aleinikov of Belarus (Torpedo-ZIL) can hardly be regarded as imports by Russian fans since they are both former Soviet stars. Ex-Spartak and Inter midfielder Igor Shalimov, new at Uralan Elista, is another coach hoping to rescue a club that almost sank last season.

Victor Gusev

UKRAINE

Surkis backs Mikhailichenko

KYIV DYNAMO president Ihor Surkis has backed coach Olexiy Mikhailichenko despite the club's indifferent domestic League form during the autumn and early UEFA Cup exit at the hands of Besiktas.

"Of course I'm not satisfied. After the winter break we shall start from the unusual position of being only fourth in the League," said Surkis. "But I want Mikhailichenko to continue, at least until the end of the season. Many forget that he took the job after the tragic death of our legendary coach Valerii Lobanovskyi. I can only imagine the pressure he has had to withstand.

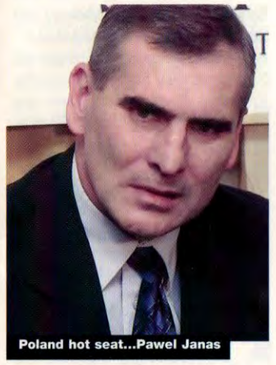
"But he has a strong personality. He steadied the ship and step by step took our club to calmer waters. During the break he will have enough time to prepare the players properly. Despite being five points adrift from leaders Shakhtar, we expect only the return of the championship to Kyiv."

Shakhtar midfielder Anatoliy Tymoshchuk was named Ukraine's Player of the Year, gaining more than twice the number of votes of Milan's Andrii Shevchenko, winner for the past two years.

Two Southampton players of the early 1980s have been appointed coaches of Ukrainian clubs. Croat Ivan Catalinic, 51, has signed an 18-month contract with struggling Metalurh Zaporizhzhiya following spells with Hajduk Split, Osijek, Zagreb and Hapoel Haifa of Israel. Ivan Golac has replaced caretaker Valentin Khodukin at Karpaty Lviv.

Metalurh Mariupol have been renamed Illichovets in accordance with the wishes of their new sponsor.

Oleg Zadernovsky


Poland hot seat...Pawel Janas

POLAND

Janas steps in

PAWEL JANAS, the former Legia Warsaw and Olympic team coach, has taken over the senior national side. He replaces Zbigniew Boniek who decided to quit for "personal reasons" after only five games in charge.

Janas, 49, who recently overcame cancer of the larynx, has signed a three-year contract with an option of another year if Poland qualify for the 2006 World Cup finals. However, he said he would quit immediately if the team's results were not good enough.

Janas, assistant manager of Poland's silver medal-winning side at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, led Legia Warsaw to successive Doubles, in 1994 and 1995, and to the Champions League quarter-finals in 1995-96. He returned to Olympic duty, but failed to qualify the side for the 2000 Sydney Games. He has recently been a vice-chairman of top-division side Amica Wronki.

As a player, Janas, a defender, won 53 caps and was a member of the team that finished third at the 1982 World Cup. His clubs included Widzew Lodz, Legia and Auxerre.

Dariusz Kurowski

BULGARIA

Berbatov is best

BAYER LEVERKUSEN striker Dimitar Berbatov capped a fine year by being named Bulgarian Player of 2002.

"The first thing I did when I received the trophy was to hold it tight," he said. "This is the first I have won in my career. With Leverkusen, I touched the Champions League and the German Cup, but they eluded me. Now I hope my luck has changed."

CSKA Sofia suffered their first defeat of the season, going down 2-1 in the first leg of their domestic Cup third-round tie at Rilski Sportist. But they hit back with a 6-0 win in the return to reach the last eight.

Slavia Sofia, another of the quarter-finalists, lost coach Jarko Olarevic, who resigned for health reasons. He was replaced by another Yugoslav, Miodgar Jesic.

Jonathan Wilson

Round-up

Komnacky out

SLOVAKIAN champions MSK Zilina have dismissed coach Frantisek Komnacky after just three months in charge. His assistant, Jaroslav Ryba, has taken over. Zilina lay third at the winter break, nine points behind leaders Slovan Bratislava. Wolfsburg defender Miroslav Karhan was named Slovakian Player of the Year.

Roy Kitson

Pyunik won the **ARMENIAN** League by eight points from Shirak Gyumri. Artur Petrosyan, currently at Young Boys of Switzerland, was named Armenian Player of the Year.

Vladimir Kalinkovich

Forward Samir Aliyev of Ukrainian club Volyn Lutsk has been voted **AZERBAIJAN** Player of the Year His clubmate, Kamal Guliev, was runner-up.

Oleg Zadernovsky

Pro-file Maciej Zurawski

Potent striker happy to be part of Wisla Krakow's Euro challenge

FANS of Polish League leaders Wisla Krakow received the ideal Yuletide gift with the announcement that the team's leading goalscorer Maciej Zurawski had extended his contract.

With eight goals in the UEFA Cup this season, including three in Wisla's impressive second-round victory over Parma and two more against Schalke in the following round, Zurawski had become a target for a plethora of Western clubs. But instead of a mid-winter move, the 26-year-old signed an improved deal to keep him at Wisla until 2007.

"I thought about a move for a long time," says Zurawski, signed from Lech Poznan in 1999 and recently named Polish Footballer of the Year for 2002. "The chance to play in a major championship in Europe was very tempting. Yet it seemed to me that I had unfinished business at Wisla. By beating Parma and Schalke, we have got through to the last 16 of the UEFA Cup and we are also aiming for the Polish League title. The ultimate goal is to play in the Champions League, and I want to be part of the adventure."

Wisla president Boguslaw Cupial, a telecommunications mogul, and coach Henryk Kasperczak are looking pleased with themselves these days – and no wonder. In Zurawski they have the most potent striker in the country, who combines strength in the air, pace, directness and great finishing ability.

The figures do not lie. As well as his hatful in the UEFA Cup this term, he scored 21 League goals last season to top the national charts and another 15 before the winter break of the current campaign. Quite a haul for someone who has not always been a striker. Early in his career, he was a steady, workmanlike midfielder, but made a successful switch to the Lech Poznan front-line four years ago and in the process put his career on an upward path.

"While Zurawski has the ability to go abroad and do very well, it's great for Wisla that he's staying," says the club's French goalkeeper Angelo Hugues. "He's a vital part of this team. Look at the way he performed in our 4-1 win at Schalke, scoring two and creating danger at every turn. He was the Man of the Match by a mile."

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club **Wisla Krakow**
Country **Poland**
Born **September 12, 1976, in Poznan**
Previous clubs **Warta Poznan, Lech Poznan**
International debut **November 1998, v Slovakia**
International caps **17 (4 goals)**
Honours **Polish League 2001 (Wisla); Polish Cup 2002 (Wisla)**

Santos supreme ahead of change for the better

Brian Homewood welcomes a move to introduce an orthodox league system for the national championship

Boy's Own story...Santos prodigy Robinho hoists the championship trophy

BRAZIL

AFTER Brazil's fifth World Cup triumph in June, this year's national championship was always in danger of producing a huge anti-climax. The return from the heady heights of Japan and South Korea to a staple diet of empty stadia, ridiculous organisation and the continued exodus of top players abroad was not the most appetising of prospects.

Amid general surprise, however, the championship turned into one of the most memorable in years, culminating with a dramatic two-leg Final in which Santos overcame Corinthians 5-2 to win their first domestic title since 1984 and only their second since the departure of Pele in 1973.

Santos, with an average age of less than 23, were everybody's favourites, credited with resurrecting the finer traditions of Brazilian football and abandoning the foul-ridden, defensive style that has plagued the game in the past decade. The emergence of a new generation of talent, led by Santos teenagers Robinho and Diego, meant departed World Cup stars such as Belletti, Dida, Luizao, Gilberto Silva, Juninho and Edilson were quickly forgotten.

This once again showed Brazilian football's impressive capacity – probably matched only by Argentina – to replenish its resources. But perhaps the best news was saved for after the championship when directors of the First Division clubs approved a new format for the 2003 tournament.

Twenty-four teams will play each other twice and the team with the most points will win the title, as opposed to the system in 2002 when 26 teams played each other once, with the top eight going into knockout stages. Moreover, the championship will be played over eight months rather than being squeezed into just over four.

That may not sound very revolutionary to European readers but in Brazil it is a major step forward. The orthodox league system has never been attempted since the championship was begun in 1971. Instead, a variety of weird and wonderful systems have been employed, and none has managed to survive from one season to the next.

Two years ago, directors concocted a mind-boggling system in which half the teams from the First Division, plus three from the Second and one from the Third went into the knockout stages. The 1994 championship kicked off with a first phase from which all 24 teams qualified and were then simply redistributed into different groups.

Back in 1979, when the military government was in control and wanted to use football to divert attention from other issues, the idea was to make the championship as big as possible and nearly 100 clubs took part. But the conventional league system has always been treated with deep suspicion by the club directors and television networks, the big fear apparently being that one club could wrap up the title with a few games to spare and render the last couple of rounds meaningless.

During the Final between Santos and Corinthians, Globo television's commentator, seemingly acting as a spokesman for his network, got into an awful mess as he tried to sing the virtues of the knockout system. "If the league is so good, why don't they use it for the World Cup?" he asked, completely getting his wires crossed.

Brazil's bigger clubs thought the same way and most voted to stick with the hybrid league/cup system. A furious Eurico Miranda, president of Vasco da Gama, even refused to sign the agreement, describing the league format as "suicide". But they were outvoted by the smaller clubs, most of whom had been left twiddling their thumbs after failing to make the knockout stages of the latest championship.

Globo television grudgingly accepted the change, while *Lance*, one of Brazil's two sports dailies, decided that the event merited a front-page editorial. "It was a courageous decision made with the help of new directors," it said. "This is a model that can help us absorb the lessons from Europe and justify our destiny as a football power, not just on the pitch but off it as well."

Extending the tournament over the whole season was an equally significant departure. Until now, a plethora of state, regional and national competitions has made Brazilian football almost incomprehensible for foreigners and locals alike.

Sao Paulo had most reason to dislike the national championship system used in 2002. They finished top of the qualifying stage, five points ahead of runners-up Sao Caetano and 13 ahead of eighth-placed Santos, who suffered a late slump. In the quarter-finals, however, Santos refound their confidence and daring to win both legs and dump hapless Sao Paulo out of the contest.

> '"If the league is so good, why don't they use it for the World Cup?" asked a Globo TV commentator, getting his wires completely crossed'

A 3-0 win at home to Gremio in the first leg of their semi-final appeared to have guaranteed Santos a place in the Final but their young team then had to survive a vicious second leg in Porto Alegre. Gremio clearly attempted to scare their opponents with some frightening challenges and Robinho was pulled off to save him from further punishment as opposing defenders took it in turns to kick him.

Gremio keeper Danrlei set the tone in the first leg. He attempted to start a fight with Diego and then warned afterwards that Robinho could end up with a broken leg if he continued to make defenders look stupid with his trickery. But despite a thoroughly poisonous atmosphere, Santos held on, lost 1-0 and were in the Final.

Corinthians, coached by the wily Carlos Alberto Parreira, made less spectacular progress, although there was no denying Parreira had done an extraordinary job to mould his modest outfit into title contenders. Their 6-2 win away to Atletico Mineiro – with Deivid scoring four goals – in the quarter-finals was the exception rather than the rule.

They won the second leg 2-1, then scraped past Fluminense in the semi-finals thanks to having the better overall record in the tournament after a 3-3 aggregate draw. Fluminense won the first leg 1-0 thanks to a late goal by the irrepressible Romario – his 15th of the championship – but Corinthians proved too strong in the return, especially after 'Shortie' limped off in the 20th minute with one of the muscular injuries that have plagued him for the past few years.

In the Final, Santos quickly took the upper hand as goals from Alberto and Renato gave them a 2-0 win and a commanding lead for the second leg. A war of nerves then ensued in which Corinthians players Kleber and Fabinho accused Diego of making racist remarks at them during the first leg, something the teenage prodigy denied.

Whether or not the allegations were true, Diego lasted only a few seconds of the second leg before he went down clutching his leg and was taken off. For the next 75 minutes, his absence did not seem to matter. Robinho once again tormented the Corinthians defence, winning and converting a 38th-minute penalty to put his team 1-0 ahead and 3-0 on aggregate.

But with 15 minutes left, Deivid equalised, then defender Anderson put Corinthians 2-1 up. That left them with seven minutes to score one more goal which would have won them the title thanks to their better overall record.

Santos, who appeared to have lost their way since volatile coach Emerson Leao was dismissed to the stands on the hour for a typically furious protest at a linesman, were teetering until Robinho popped up again in the 88th minute. He broke down the right and crossed for Elano to equalise. Just for good measure, Robinho set up a final goal for Leo in added time.

All ours...San Lorenzo and trophy

COPA SUDAMERICANA

San Lorenzo make it a double

ARGENTINA'S San Lorenzo won their second continental cup of 2002 when beating Atletico Nacional of Colombia 4-0 on aggregate in the Final of the Copa Sudamericana. It added to their success in the final edition of the Mercosur Cup last January.

The Copa Sudamericana, introduced as a stop-gap following the cancellation of the Mercosur and Merconorte Cups, was a surprise success, generating sizeable crowds and good TV ratings in spite of the withdrawal of Brazilian clubs due to a conflict of TV sponsorship interests. Although the prize money was lower than for the Mercosur, the virtually bankrupt San Lorenzo will welcome their £370,000 reward.

They were certainly made to earn it. Their players were showered with objects thrown from the crowd as they established a 4-0 lead in the Final first leg in Medellin. The game was suspended after 70 minutes, but CONMEBOL officials ordered the referee to restart it and also warned San Lorenzo's players – who by then were in the showers – they would forfeit the match if they did not return to the field within five minutes. The game was completed without further incident.

Nacional took a virtual reserve squad to the second leg in Buenos Aires, given the size of their task and the fact they were due to play a domestic closing championship play-off game on the same day. San Lorenzo, in any case, were happy enough to play out a 0-0 draw, setting up a clash with Libertadores Cup holders Olimpia of Paraguay.

Eric Weil

Pro-file Joaquin Botero

Bolivian 'camel' turned cheetah now giving defences the hump

LAST year, in the time it takes to say 'International Federation of Football History and Statistics', Joaquin Botero had the ball in the back of the net. The Germany-based organisation recognised the Bolivian striker's 49 League goals for Bolivar as a world best for a top-flight player over the latest complete season.

It was a golden year for the man from El Dorado, a village to the north of the capital, La Paz, and one that showed he had maintained his steady progress ever since his exploits in college football brought him to the attention of Bolivar.

Botero was twice loaned out to gain experience with Second Division sides, and since his return his goal tally has increased each year. This term's haul fired Bolivar to the domestic championship.

The forward's movement and burst of pace had always been impressive. But a tendency to run with his head down limited his options and won him the nickname of 'the camel'. Since the defect was corrected, Botero has looked more like a cheetah, with his slight frame and sleek acceleration allowing him to prey on defences. Yet scoring is not his only forte. "He also sets up plenty of goals. He's a real asset to the team with his pace and generosity," says Bolivar coach Vladimir Soria, a former national team captain.

Given the relative weakness of the Bolivian League, it is hard to escape the conclusion that goals are relatively easy to come by. So now it is up to Botero to prove that he is something more than a local phenomenon.

For some time he has expressed a desire to move abroad, and Bolivar will do well to hold on to him since his prolific season has brought him to the attention of clubs in Mexico, Argentina and the Middle East. At international level his big challenge will be the 2006 World Cup qualifiers. He had his moments in the last campaign, especially in the two games against Argentina, but occasionally gave the impression that he was still finding his feet. He can now take the field with more confidence.

Botero can also divide responsibilities with a new partner, teenager Jose Alfredo Castillo, named as the world's top League goalscorer in 2001. "He is more of a penalty area player," says Botero, "who is always in the right place to score. I move out to the wings much more, looking for space."

On paper they would seem to be made for each other. Now Bolivia hope that Botero and Castillo can take their club form all the way to the World Cup.

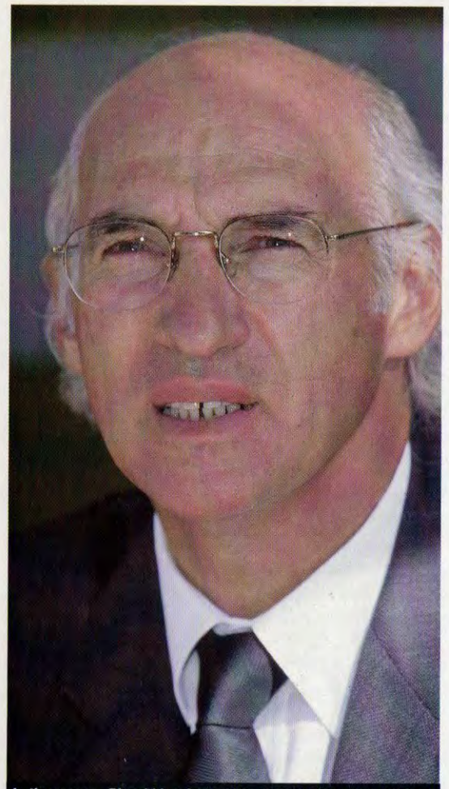
Tim Vickery

Fact file

Club **Bolivar**
Country **Bolivia**
Born **December 10, 1977, in El Dorado, La Paz**
Previous clubs **Mariscal Santa Cruz (loan), Municipal (loan)**
International debut **July 1999, v Egypt**
International caps **20 (6 goals)**
Honours **Bolivian championship 2002**

Bianchi back with Boca – at a price

The former champions have splashed out in an attempt to recapture their glory days, writes Eric Weil


In the money...Bianchi has been offered £840,000 a year by Boca

ARGENTINA

BOCA JUNIORS have stunned Argentinian football by agreeing to pay Carlos Bianchi £840,000 a year to return to coach the club. The salary is almost twice as much as that paid to his River Plate counterpart, Manuel Pellegrini, and more than double that received by Bianchi's predecessor at Boca, Uruguayan Oscar Tabarez, whose contract was not renewed after the end of last season. The deal is all the more remarkable given the economic plight of domestic football.

"I'm astounded," said River president Jose Maria Aguilar. "Here at River we have to live with austerity and have reduced a $48 million [£31m] debt by $14m [£9m] in the past year."

But the thinking behind Boca's determination to get their man is clear. Between 1998 and 2001, Bianchi led them to three domestic championships, the Libertadores Cup twice and the World Club Cup. That record looks all the more mouthwatering given that, since he left, Boca have won nothing.

But Bianchi has a battle on his hands to recapture the good old days. All the players from his previous spell in charge have been sold, and while the current squad is large, only 14 have significant First Division experience.

While Boca have been spending, River have been raising money – sealing a deal to sell defender Martin Demichelis to Bayern Munich in June for £3m. Meanwhile, playmaker Andres D'Alessandro has been on a recce to Barcelona, though his only comment on his return was: "I want to stay at River until the end of the season [in June] to win the Libertadores Cup." The only offer received so far for D'Alessandro has been £3.2m from Hamburg for 50 per cent of his contract.

The Demichelis deal brought River's proceeds for the sale of 12 leading players in the past three years to almost £60m, compared with Boca's £45m for 10 players. Leading players' agent Gustavo Mascardi says: "With rare exceptions, River Plate players who have gone to Europe have been successful. European clubs generally feel investing in them is safer [than in Boca's]. For example, I can't say D'Alessandro is better than [Boca's Carlos] Tevez in the same position, but he is the one interesting several European clubs."

Independiente have made a remarkable rise from table-proppers to table-toppers but their ability to continue at the top is increasingly in question. The club own no part of many of their opening championship-winning side – including Federico Dominguez, Lucas Pusineri and Federico Insua. Instead, they are owned by a consortium of businessmen put together by club owner Daniel Grinbank. They can move their players out just as quickly as they moved them in, and are clearly not in the game for charitable purposes.

At the same time the club have debts to pay off and may be forced to sell players they do have a stake in, including Diego Castagno Suarez (90 per cent owned) and Gabriel Milito (80 per cent), recently named Most Valuable Player of 2002 by the sports writers' federation. The difficulty may be finding a club able to buy them in the current European recession.

Round-up

PARAGUAYAN striker Jose Cardozo, who hit 50 League goals for Mexico's Toluca during 2002, was named South America's Player of the Year in the annual poll conducted by Uruguayan newspaper *El Pais*. Cardozo won with 39 votes, from Uruguayan Sergio Orteman of Paraguay's Libertadores Cup winners Olimpia (32 votes) and Orteman's compatriot Alejandro Lembo of Nacional (30).

CHILE: Colo Colo, the country's most popular club, celebrated their survival after bankruptcy proceedings by winning the closing championship. The Santiago club, who have now settled debt payment plans with creditors, beat Universidad Catolica 5-2 on aggregate in the play-off Final to secure their 23rd League title.

Union Espanola took the unusual step of sacking eight players rather than their coach after losing to Colo Colo in the first stage of the play-offs.

Elias Figueroa and Alberto Quintano, who formed a formidable defensive partnership for Chile in the 1970s, have been named technical directors of the national team. The head coach position is still vacant.

ECUADOR: Emelec retained the overall championship after winning their last match of the play-offs. On the final day, when three of the six teams had a chance of taking the trophy, the Electrics – they are partly funded by a power company – beat Aucas 2-1 to see off challengers Barcelona and El Nacional.

Referees from Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil took charge of several play-off games after domestic officials were accused of making too many mistakes.

PERU: Sporting Cristal, runaway closing championship winners, took the overall season title by default after opening winners Universitario lost the right to contest it because they finished outside the top four of the closing event. Universitario's financial problems forced them to virtually disband the first team and they finished second bottom. Argentinian Osvaldo Piazza resigned – the second coach to leave the club this term.

Juan Aurich were relegated after a play-off against Deportivo Wanka with their unpaid players complaining they did not have enough money for fares to go to training or buy sufficient food.

URUGUAY: Nacional, the opening championship winners, took their third successive overall title, beating closing champions Danubio 2-1 in both legs of the play-off Final. Victory was all the more remarkable since Nacional players had refused to train more than once a day in protest at not being paid for five months.

Nacional's Cameroonian striker Pierre Webo was one of the season's sensations, scoring 17 goals in 28 games, but was upstaged by another 20-year-old, German Hornos of Fenix, who finished League top scorer in his first season with 28.

COLOMBIA: Independiente Medellin won their first League title for 45 years by beating surprise team Deportivo Pasto 3-1 on aggregate in the closing championship Final.

Martha Toro, the only top division female referee, was knocked unconscious by a bottle at the end of a recent League match. However, the notorious rival Medellin gangs who follow Nacional and Independiente have signed a peace pact in an effort to curb rising hooligan ism.

Eric Weil

Final countdown...Toluca v Morelia

MEXICO

Free-scoring Toluca land fifth title

TOLUCA won their fifth League title in style, beating Atletico Morelia 4-2 on aggregate in the Final and setting new scoring records along the way.

That said, they were made to work hard for victory by Morelia, who won the first leg 1-0 at home and took a first-minute lead in the return only to succumb to Toluca's impressive firepower. Paraguayan Jose Cardozo hit his side's third goal in the 4-1 win to bring his season tally to 38. Overall, Toluca scored 80 goals, beating their own short-league format record of 66 set in 2000.

The side achieved their success despite two changes of coach. Ricardo Lavolpe left during the regular season to become national team manager, and his replacement, former assistant Wilson Graneolatti, departed after guiding Toluca to the semi-finals having fallen out with president Rafael Lebrija. The latter criticised Graneolatti after a 2-1 defeat by Guadalajara in the quarter-final first leg; the coach stood down after Toluca's 3-0 win in the return.

That left the way open for former player and lower division coach Alberto Jorge to take the reins for the semi-finals and Final, though he was quick to give Lavolpe most of the credit for constructing the side.

Atletico Celaya became the latest team to move city as a result of the economic merry-go-round. They left Celaya, to the north-west of Mexico City, for Cuernavaca (40 miles south-east of the capital), home of a First Division team, Marte, in the 1960s.

Carlos Ramirez

Homes to call their own

Paul Gardner on the drive by MLS clubs to construct purpose-built soccer stadiums

UNITED STATES

MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER has had enough of living in rented premises. The clubs want their own stadiums. This is a problem that has been recognised for years, but never seriously tackled.

When the modern era of pro soccer started in the USA in 1967 the 23 clubs involved used 20 stadiums. Not one was purpose-built, and the majority were baseball stadiums, meaning soccer fields had to be wedged into arenas built to accommodate the very different shape of baseball fields.

The baseball clubs were not only sharing their grounds; they were sharing their summer season. Inevitably, there were scheduling conflicts, and when dates clashed it was soccer – the lodgers – that had to switch their games.

Another problem was that the baseball people clearly had no idea about what a soccer game looked like. Their only vision of football was of the gridiron version, played by huge men whose heavily-studded shoes were likely to play havoc with a grass surface. To the baseball mind, it seemed certain soccer would be equally destructive. So they retained the right to call games off, and did so from time to time, much to the soccer league's embarrassment.

The NASL put up with all this throughout its existence. When it went out of business in 1984, it had not built a single soccer stadium, which meant that when MLS arrived in 1996, it faced the same old situation. Where to play?

MLS attempted to get new investors to commit to build soccer stadiums. But investors were not easy to find, and the requirement had to be dropped. MLS clubs ended up playing, mostly, in gridiron stadiums, which often brought yet another embarrassment – that of having prominent gridiron field markings. While regular season scheduling conflicts were minimised, they now arose at the end of the MLS season during the crucial play-off period – when the gridiron season was just getting under way.

In 1998, at long last, there was action. It came from Lamar Hunt, a veteran of the old NASL days. Now owner of Columbus Crew, Hunt tried in vain to get the voters of that town to agree to a city-funded stadium, so he decided to go it alone. He spent nearly £20 million of his own money, and in nine months Columbus had the country's first pro-level soccer-specific stadium. There was no immediate rush to follow Hunt's lead but it was seen that Crew's season ticket sales leaped upwards and that the club, as the stadium owners, now took all the revenue from parking and concessions. This was soccer-generated money that had always, in the past, been pocketed by the non-soccer stadium owners.

Hi-tech...how LA Galaxy's new stadium (also below) will look

The emergence of billionaire Phil Anschutz as the major force in MLS (he owns six of the League's 10 clubs) moved things forward. In 2001, the Anschutz-owned Los Angeles Galaxy had to play their home play-off against Chicago Fire in a small college stadium because a gridiron game had taken over the Rose Bowl. That won't happen again. Galaxy have a new 27,000-seat stadium nearing completion in the suburb of Carson. Built by Anschutz's AEG group at a cost of £77m, it will stage this year's MLS Cup and also serve as part of a United States Soccer Federation training centre for the various national teams.

While AEG has been forging ahead in California, it has run into a roadblock in New Jersey, where the MetroStars have long been dissatisfied with their treatment by the owners of Giants stadium. When AEG took over the team a year ago, the search for a new stadium site was stepped up, and things were looking good to build an arena in nearby Harrison. It only needed the New Jersey legislature to pass a bill authorising £20m in bond funding, but a huge complication arose. The stock value of another Anschutz enterprise, Qwest Communications, nosedived, and New Jersey's state pension fund lost £108m as a result, leading the state to file a lawsuit accusing Anschutz of fraud.

This is not the first stadium frustration for MLS. Dallas Burn's plans to move to a new stadium in McKinney were thwarted when the town council went against its original decision to approve it. While another venue is sought, Burn – determined to leave the huge and ancient Cotton Bowl – are looking at playing in a high-school stadium in Carroll, 23 miles north-west of Dallas. The stadium is new, but the fact remains it is a high-school facility – hardly an image that bolsters the 'major league' part of MLS.

Odds against...Zamalek thwart a Raja attack

Zamalek crowned but cynicism reigns

Mark Gleeson on an undignified finale to the 2002 African Champions League

ZAMALEK are the new African club champions, but cynicism was the real winner of the 2002 Champions League title.

The Egyptian club extended their record total of continental titles to five with their narrow 1-0 aggregate triumph over Raja Casablanca of Morocco. But the tie was far from elegant and the second leg, rather predictably, descended into a massive brawl on the pitch with officials, players and police all trading punches in the Cairo stadium.

North African derbies always have a heat and passion about them but this time matters often got out of hand, even despite the heroic efforts of the Libyan referee, Abdelhakim Shelmani.

Zamalek played their opponents perfectly. The Egyptians were ultra-cautious in the first leg in Casablanca, giving little away in a dour goalless draw during which they spent most of their time getting men behind the ball.

The return leg was not much better and it was always likely the outcome would hinge on one moment of magic. It came in stoppage time at the end of the first half when a Raja clearance fell at the feet of Zamalek midfielder Tamer Abdel Hamied, who took the ball on a few paces before blasting a curling shot into the net.

Raja, who had more skill and enterprise, never had a chance to find any rhythm as they were consistently tormented by their opponents. A hack here, a hand in the face there, cynical tackling and endless theatre made for a stop-start affair.

Predictably, the Moroccans were not above all the intimidation and the second leg's first punch-up came after just eight minutes. The spats continued throughout the game, ending with an almighty set-to on the final whistle.

Zamalek deserved to win, especially since they had lost only one game en route to the Final, but there was little joy in their play.

On a positive note, the success marked an extraordinary feat of longevity for the famed Hassan twins – Hossam, the striker, and defender Ibrahim. Both returned to the winners' rostrum 15 years after taking the old Champions Cup title with Zamalek's perennial rivals, Al Ahly, when Englishman Jeff Butler coached the Cairo club to the title against Al Hilal of Sudan.

Now 36, there seems no end to their achievements – Hossam was previously the world's most capped international and both are now setting out on another year of competition.

South Africa favourites to stage 2010 World Cup

SIX African countries have declared their interest in hosting the 2010 World Cup finals but the validity of their claims and just how serious they really are will only be known in April when the merits of their respective bids are called to account.

Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa and Tunisia all formally made the opening moves to stage the first World Cup on African soil by submitting letters of intent to meet FIFA's first deadline of December 31.

Nigeria just scraped in, sending their fax to Zurich on the eve of the deadline, but the West African country's show of interest is likely to amount to little more than political posturing and 'keeping up with the Joneses'. Instead, South Africa and their North African rivals are set to fight out the battle to win the right to host the event.

Just which North African countries will become clear only on April 30, when FIFA will require a formal confirmation of candidacy as it now looks to have passed the point of no return in its determination to give Africa the World Cup.

In between, FIFA will send the six countries a detailed list of requirements for the hosting of the World Cup, a document that is sure to send several of the prospective candidates running for the hills. Only Morocco and South Africa have attempted a candidacy before. Morocco bid for the fourth time and South Africa for the second, following their narrow and controversial defeat by Germany in the 2006 race.

Realistically, South Africa are runaway favourites, but the likes of Morocco and Tunisia have proximity to Europe in their favour. South Africa came very close in the 2006 bid and were probably let down in the end by concerns over crime. But the tourism industry is now burgeoning despite those fears, the infrastructure is already in place and a major boost to the country's organising capacity came last year with the successful hosting of the World Summit in Johannesburg.

South Africa host the cricket World Cup in February, which will test the country's capabilities again and is likely to prove its ability to stage a major tournament.

Morocco gained a lot of experience from their previous bids but the problem remains their lack of stadiums. Strong connections with France and other European countries will keep Morocco in the race until the end but it will be a big surprise if FIFA risk taking the World Cup to a country with limited capacity.

The petro dollars of Libya are liberally spread about when they back a cause and Saad Gaddafi, son of the country's leader, has recently set about creating a profile for himself in world football. Shares in Juventus, the hosting of the Italian Super Cup in Tripoli and a bid for the 2006 African Nations Cup have thrust Libya into the spotlight. But the country will be let down by sparse infrastructure after decades of diplomatic and economic isolation.

Egypt is too chaotic for a World Cup; Tunisia too small. No FIFA big-wig will want to sit in Lagos for a month. It should not be too tough a decision when the FIFA executive committee vote in April 2004.

Mark Gleeson

Hayatou rings changes to help save his job

AFRICA'S leading club competitions will undergo radical changes in 2004 as the Confederation of African football seeks to generate more revenue for its clubs. The Champions League is to be expanded, with the Cup-winners Cup and CAF Cup to be merged into a single tournament, the African Confederations Cup.

The Champions League, which carries prize money of around £2.25million, will double the number of participating teams to 64, with the 12 major countries allowed two entries each. However, only the eight clubs who reach the league phase of the competition will receive any income, as in this year's tournament.

Domestic Cup winners from across the continent and the third-placed League sides from the 12 major countries will contest the African Confederations Cup. This competition, for which CAF will seek sponsorship, will also have a league format at the last-eight stage.

The revolutionary changes come as CAF president Issa Hayatou seeks an overhaul of his organisation. He received a wake-up call after the majority of African countries voted against him at the FIFA elections and realises his chances of staying on rest on dramatic reforms.

Instead of using the established committees to discuss the changes, Hayatou set up two ad-hoc committees to review the club competitions and the future of the African Nations Cup finals as a World Cup qualifying event.

Mark Gleeson

Taking a chance...Hayatou hopes to gain favour by making radical reforms

Round-up

Diop and Hossam challenge Diouf

SENEGALESE internationals El Hadji Diouf and Pape Bouba Diop and Egyptian striker Ahmed Hossam have been named as the three finalists for the **2002 AFRICAN FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR** award. Diouf, who joined Liverpool from Lens last year, won the 2001 award and could become only the third player to win in successive years, following Abedi Pele and George Weah. Diop, still with Lens, was named Senegal's Player of the Year in December following his performances at the World Cup. Hossam won the Double with Ajax last season, though he disappointed at the African Nations Cup in January, when Egypt were eliminated in the quarter-finals.

The winner will be announced at the Confederation of African Football awards evening, scheduled for South Africa on March 31.

CENTRAL AFRICA

Fledgling club Mount Cameroon won the **CAMEROON** FA Cup for the first time, beating Sable de Batie 2-1 after extra-time in the Final. The new holders were formed only in 1999.

EAST AFRICA

KENYA twice came back from a goal down to beat hosts Tanzania in the Final of the annual East and Central African Senior Challenge Cup in Mwanza. It was a first regional title for the Harambee Stars in 19 years and proof of Kenyan football's major revival in recent months. Kenya are well placed to qualify for the 2004 Nations Cup, which would make them the first East African side to do so in 12 years.

UGANDA will host the East and Central African Club Championship this year, with the Final to be played in Kampala on February 8.

NORTH AFRICA

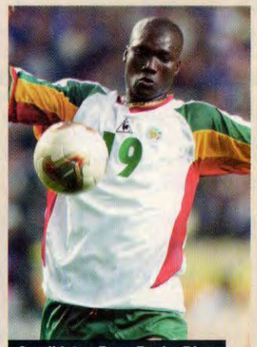
Georges Leekens, the former Belgian national team coach, has taken the reins in **ALGERIA** and will start his new job with a friendly against Uganda in Blida on January 25.

World Cup midfielder Zoubeir Baya has returned home to **TUNISIA**, signing for former club Etoile Sahel after spells in Germany, Turkey and the Middle East.

Champions Esperance have sacked Swiss coach Michel Decastel two months after their failure to reach the African Champions League semi-finals. His replacement is former Tunisian national team coach Faouzi Benzerti.

Former Algerian national coach Ali Fergani has joined CA Bizerte on an 18-month contract. Brazil-born Tunisian international Adailton has been released by CS Sfaxien.

MOROCCO will not host this year's Arab Club Championship after failing to provide the required guarantees. The tournament will now take place in Saudi Arabia.


Candidate...Pape Bouba Diop

SOUTHERN AFRICA

ANGOLAN Cup winners Petro Atletico have appointed Dutchman Jan Brouwer as their new coach, replacing Brazilian Jose Alberto Avila.

Dizzy Kapenya, a defender with champions Highlanders, was named **ZIMBABWE'S** Footballer of the Year.

WEST AFRICA

NIGERIA won a third successive African women's championship in December to qualify for the World Cup in China this year. They beat Ghana 2-0 in the Final, taking revenge for losing to the Ghanaians in the group stage, their first ever defeat by African opposition. Ghana also qualify for the World Cup.

Mark Gleeson

Takahara is tops

Hamburg's new signing leaves the J.League on a high, write Mike Plastow and Yumiko Nagae

JAPAN

NAOHIRO TAKAHARA'S extraordinary season of highs and lows came to a fitting close when he was voted the J.League's 2002 Player of the Year. Shortly afterwards, the championship's youngest ever top scorer became the latest Japanese export to Europe, joining Hamburg on a two-and-a-half-year contract.

The 23-year-old scored 26 goals in 27 matches as Jubilo Iwata stormed to their First and Second Stage triumphs. However, Japan's first-choice striker also tasted the disappointment of missing the World Cup due to a lung condition contracted shortly before the tournament.

Takahara surged back directly afterwards to score a goal a game at the end of the First Stage and carried on in the same form to the end of the season.

Besides losing their top striker, Jubilo have also lost coach Masakazu Suzuki, who stepped down having just won the Manager of the Year award. The 47-year-old did not give any hint about why he had resigned beyond saying he feels the time is right. Suzuki's replacement is his assistant, Masaaki Yanagishita.

Shimizu S-Pulse's Zdravko Zemunovic was another coach to step down after his team finished only seventh and 12th in the two League stages. Meanwhile, Kashiwa Reysol have released Brazilian coach Marco Aurelio after the side only narrowly avoided relegation. Aurelio had taken over from Steve Perryman in August.

Urawa Reds defender Keisuke Tsuboi won the Rookie of the Year award.

Trophy-laden...Naohiro Takahara

SOUTH KOREA

Songnam take the plaudits

SONGNAM CHUNMA clinched the League title for the second year in a row and proceeded to dominate the annual K-League awards.

Striker Kim Dae-ui was the overwhelming choice as Most Valuable Player of 2002 after scoring nine goals and making nine assists.

Cha Kyoung-bok won the coaching award and has already begun strengthening the champions' squad for the new campaign by signing Russian forward Denis Laktionov from former Asian champions Suwon Bluewings and Korean international Yoon Jong-hwan from Japan's Cerezo Osaka.

However, Songnam did not have it all their own way, with Ulsan Hyundai starlet Lee Chun-soo picking up the Rookie of the Year award.

The K-League is expanding to 11 teams this season, with the city of Daegu becoming the latest to boast a professional club.

Michael Church

Round-up

Haan handed China post

New role...Arie Haan

ASIA

DUTCHMAN Arie Haan has been named as the new coach of the **CHINESE** national team. The former Stuttgart Kickers boss takes over from Bora Milutinovic, who guided China to their first-ever World Cup finals appearance last year.

Chinese international striker Su Maozhen has retired from football to attend coaching classes in England with Manchester United. The former Chinese Player of the Year scored 27 times for his country.

SAUDI ARABIA retained the Arab Cup thanks to a golden goal winner from Mohamed Nour. His strike saw off Bahrain in the Final in Kuwait City. The Saudis went into the Final without Dutch coach Gerard Van der Lem, who suffered a heart attack on the eve of his side's semi-final clash with Morocco. The former Ajax youth coach signed a four-year contract last year to act as Saudi Arabia's director of football.

THAILAND continued their dominance in South-east Asia by defeating Indonesia in a penalty shoot-out to win the Tiger Cup for the third time in four attempts. Peter Withe's side saw off the co-hosts with a 4-2 shoot-out win after a 2-2 draw. **SINGAPORE** coach Jan Poulsen resigned following his side's poor showing in the competition.

KUWAITI striker Bashar Abdullah has signed for Al Ain of the United Arab Emirates.

An **IRANIAN** appeals court has confirmed a five-year playing ban at international level for 22-year-old Esteghlal star Mojahed Khaziravi. He was recently convicted of misdemeanours relating to his visit to a brothel. Khaziravi has also been banned for three years from playing for his club.

The Asian Football Confederation has banned **INDIA** from hosting any international tournaments for a year after the country's federation failed to provide a report on a mass brawl during a game between East Bengal and Brazilian side Palmeiras in Calcutta in September 2001.

Mohun Bagan won the country's All Airlines Gold Cup, beating Tollygunge Agragami 3-1 in the Final.

Shagadam won the **TURKMENISTAN** League by four points from Nisa Ashgabat, but lost the Cup Final on penalties to Garagum following a 0-0 draw.

Pakhtakor secured the **UZBEKISTAN** title, finishing five points clear of Neftchi.

Michael Church, Azam Mahmood, G C Das & Vladimir Kalinkovich

OCEANIA

IN **AUSTRALIA**, last season's Grand Final opponents Sydney Olympic and Perth Glory are well clear in the race for this term's regular season title. Olympic held a four-point lead over their rivals at the turn of the year, with third-placed Newcastle a further 10 points back.

The **SAMOAN** federation has lifted a suspension on Hosanna for fielding six ineligible players during their Champion of Champions tournament semi-final win. The federation overturned their original decision, thus allowing Hosanna to play in the Final, after accepting the club's explanation that they had fielded the players because they believed Moaula, who hold the players' registration, had disbanded, making the six eligible to appear for them.

Tupapa won the **COOK ISLANDS'** Round Cup by beating Avatiu 3-1 in the Final.

Paul Moon

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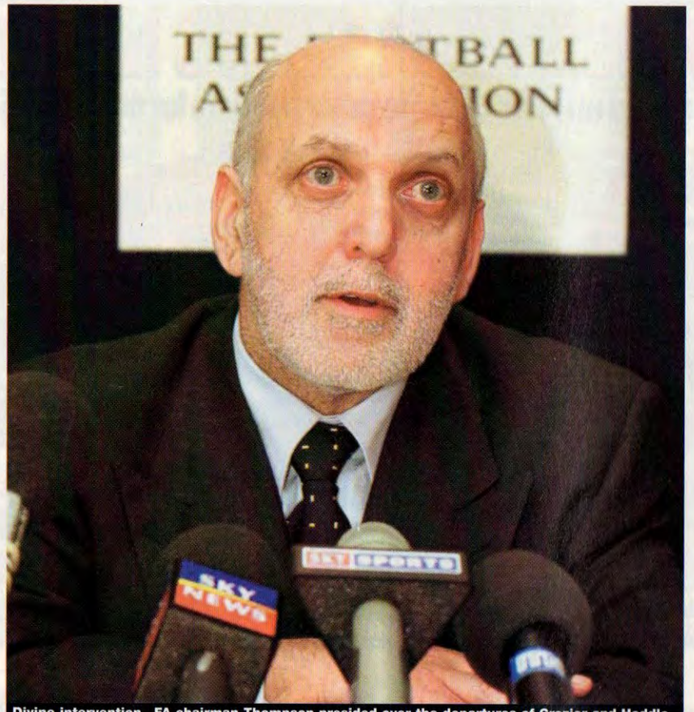
Brian Glanville's LAST WORD



Divine intervention...FA chairman Thompson presided over the departures of Crozier and Hoddle

Thompson guided by hand of God

'He evokes a match at Salerno in which a bomb was thrown on to the pitch, and he was mercifully unharmed. Can I assume he was somewhere nearby on the touchline rather than in the stands, well out of harm's way?'

GOD, as we know, looks after drunks and little children. Now we are told that he also looks after chairmen of the Football Association. In an interview which he now seems to regret, Geoff Thompson, the hardly dynamic FA chairman who was praised (or blamed) for the departure from Soho Square of chief executive Adam Crozier, sanctimoniously revealed that the Lord is on his side.

"My faith has helped me," he declared. "When I get in a difficult period, I say, 'Come on, Lord,' and it helps me. Amazingly so."

He evokes a match at Salerno when a bomb was thrown on to the pitch, and he was mercifully unharmed. I remember the incident well, and could have done with a little more chapter and verse.

As I recall, the bomb landed near an unfortunate linesman. Thompson was presumably sitting in the stand, or can I assume that he was somewhere nearby on the touchline, rather than well out of harm's way?

He was also protected, he feels, when he was "held up by bandits on the way to Minsk". I wish he had told us more of what had surely been a frightening experience. "Suddenly someone would arrive who shouldn't have been there," he added, "and say: 'How can I help you?'"

Thompson has kind words for Crozier, which would doubtless be echoed by the FA staff he put on salaries of over £70,000 a year, the emphasis being, needless to say, on the marketing department. Though these plaudits are somewhat diluted by such words as "perhaps the time was right to move on. Crozier was never going to be long term ...it was the right time for him to go". As one who never thought there was a right time for Crozier to be appointed, I cannot quarrel with that.

Thompson also presided over the defenestration of Glenn ("I never said them things") Hoddle after his faux pas about the disabled. That should never have been a sacking offence, not least after nothing was done about Hoddle's embarrassing and indiscreet World Cup diary, ghosted by an FA executive.

Perhaps it is unfair to recall the words of a famously dissident 19th century MP, Henry Labouchere, who said of the great William Ewart Gladstone: "Every politician sometimes produces an ace from his sleeve, but only Mr Gladstone would have us believe that the Almighty put it there."

Two takes on Shearer's elbow

IN A peculiarly silly item in his *Daily Telegraph* column, Martin Johnson, best known for his knowledge of cricket, praised Alan Shearer for driving an elbow into the Inter and Italy defender Fabio Cannavaro, after Cannavaro had palpably held him during a Champions League game at Newcastle.

The consequence was that, though the referee saw nothing, Shearer, on TV evidence, was condemned to a two-match ban.

Johnson's far better informed colleague, Alan Smith, who has first-hand experience of the wiles and tricks of Italian defenders, made his point much more cogently in the same newspaper. The methods of Italian defenders have, indeed, across the years, been intolerable; the shirt pulling, the little shoves.

But I cannot remember Smith, in his days as an Arsenal and England centre-forward, ever swinging an elbow, well versed, one assumes, in that old advice: "Never retaliate." Which, of course, is just what cynical European defenders want their victims to do.

All Shearer achieved with his moment of petulance was to deprive Newcastle of his irreplaceable services. Shearer himself has been excoriated in some journalistic quarters this season for his own provocation of the Kyiv Dynamo defender Andrii Husin, whose retaliation resulted in Newcastle getting a penalty.

Nor does one easily forget the incident, just before the 1998 World Cup finals, when Shearer spun round to boot Neil Lennon of Leicester in the face. A thoroughly hypocritical and disingenuous FA disciplinary committee decided he was trying to "disentangle" himself.

High-flier...McManaman was outstanding for Real Madrid

Getting a Grip of Macca history

ADDING gratuitous insult to undoubted injury, Tord Grip, right-hand man to Sven Goran Eriksson, recently informed us: "Steve McManaman has never really played a good match for England and at the moment isn't up for selection for the national team. He needs to be a regular in the Real Madrid line-up before he can come up for discussion."

Really? How good a grasp (or grip) has Tord Grip of the recent history of England's team if he ignores Euro 96 when McManaman, if played in his correct position on the right flank rather than the left, had scintillating moments?

Not to choose him for the 2002 World Cup squad while David Beckham was so seriously handicapped by the injury to his right foot – he surely had a valid excuse after being blamed for allegedly jumping out of the way on the occasion of Brazil's first goal – seemed utterly perverse.

Not least because, as we well know, McManaman had finished the European season in triumph, coming on as a 'super sub' or reserve deluxe for Real Madrid in both Champions League semi-final and Final and was outstanding in the Final at Hampden Park.

Grip's criticisms were ill-judged, ill-natured and unfounded.

Plucky, lucky Blatter

REJOICE, rejoice! With one bound, Sepp Blatter, the Teflon president, was free.

The prosecutor's office in Zurich absolved him of any blame over financial dealings in FIFA. Moreover, the Zurich office dismissed with scorn and obloquy the charges that had been made against him.

"A dirty game," cried Blatter, "that has caused unnecessary and untold damage to the image of football." One in the eye indeed for the five, count them, five FIFA vice-presidents who laid the seemingly baseless charges.

But hark! The prosecutors of the town of Zurich continue with their investigations into FIFA's infinitely complex finances and "Blatter's alleged mismanagement".

We must all earnestly trust that Blatter will be cleared again.

After all, none of this happened to Joao Havelange.

Millichip: a decent man, but doomed

THEY say you should never speak ill of the dead. So let me first say that Bert Millichip, the recently deceased, at 88, ex-chairman of the Football Association, was a thoroughly decent, well-meaning man with the good of the game at heart.

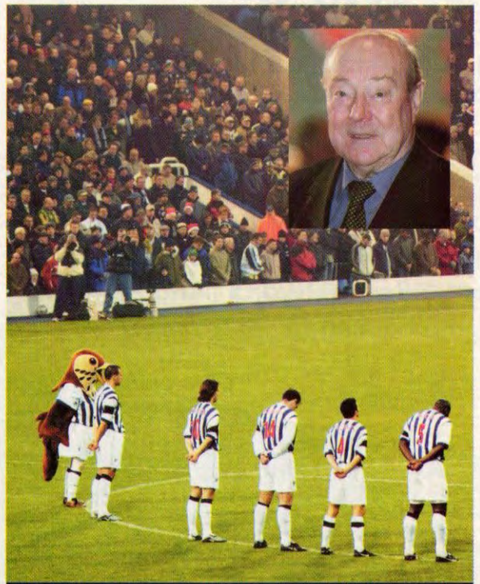
Alas, the path to hell is paved with good intentions. We still don't know the whole story of whether Bert made a verbal gentleman's agreement to let Germany have the 2006 World Cup in exchange for England getting Euro 96. All Europe believed it, Bert and the FA denied it, but there's no doubt that belief worked against England's 2006 bid.

When Terry Venables, in the middle of court cases ending with his long suspension as a company director, was mooted for the England managership, Bert declared it would happen "over his dead body". The smoke cleared, Terry had the job, Bert was alive and well. And on England's USA tour of 1993, when Graham Taylor had so plainly lost the plot and there was only a minimal hope of World Cup qualification, Bert raised hopes by slipping into a Taylor press conference and looking on balefully. But he didn't intervene. Taylor stayed, and England were eliminated.

Years ago, for a would-be TV satirical programme, I wrote a parody of 'Burlington Bertie', the famous music hall song. With no disrespect to Bert's memory, I append it:

I'm West Bromwich Bertie,
My hands don't get dirty,
I never know what's going on.
I spoke against Tel, then I
thought, what the hell,
And I said, "You're the right
one, my son."
Bert, Bert, I'm really inert,
But I still am the chairman,
you know.
I muddle on gaily and
change my mind daily,
I'm Bert and you can't
make me go.

Yes, a good and decent man, doomed to preside at a time when decency was not enough.



Tribute...players pay respects to the memory of Millichip (inset)

February 1966

BRAZIL, the favourites for the forthcoming World Cup finals in England, graced the cover of *World Soccer* 37 years ago. The photo dated back to their last visit to Wembley in 1963. They appeared to be a good bet for another World Cup triumph on the same ground later in the year, despite being drawn in a difficult group with Hungary, Portugal and Bulgaria.

Analysing the draw, Roger Macdonald correctly predicted a victory for England in the Final, although he foresaw Italy as the other finalists.

Another prescient prediction came from the Far East, where Andrew Dettre, having seen North Korea beat Australia to qualify for their first World Cup finals, insisted that they would be no pushovers. The Koreans, of course, were to shock the world when they knocked Italy out of the tournament.

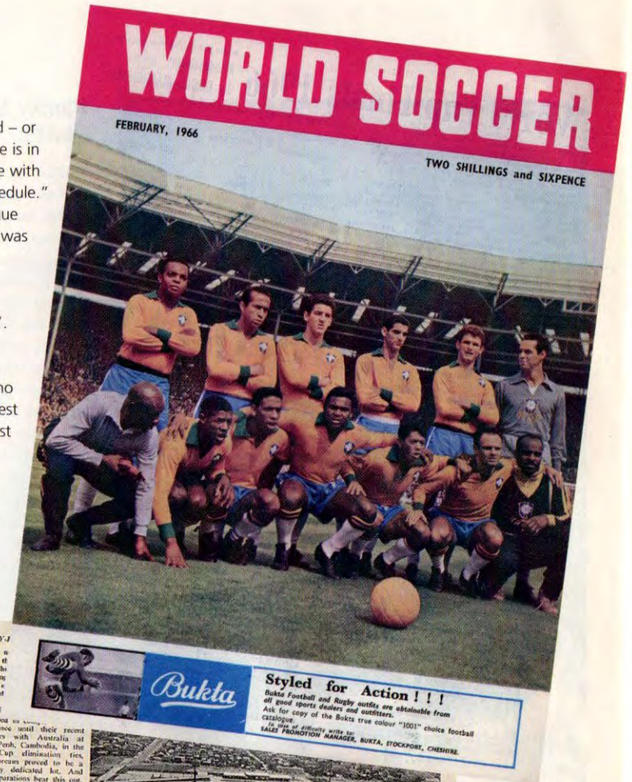
"One thing seems certain," wrote Dettre. "They will be one of the fittest, most thoroughly prepared teams in England."

Our man in Pyongyang was particularly taken by their preparations. "They work together, live together and train together – twice a day, seven days a week. They're a team in every sense of the word. Even when they walk on the street, they often go holding hands like young lovers. None of them is married – or allowed to get married while he is in the squad. That would interfere with their rigid, spartan training schedule."

Elsewhere, the English League Cup, though still in its infancy, was growing in stature, with Brian Marshall noting that the competition, after six seasons, "appears to be gaining favour".

Leading clubs such as Manchester United, Everton, Arsenal and Spurs had played no part in the League Cup. But West Bromwich Albion were the latest club to sign up – and had just reached that year's Final.

The incentive of European qualification – the League Cup winners now qualified for the Fairs Cup – was an extra incentive. As West Brom secretary Alan Everiss said: "We now have three chances of getting into Europe – by winning the League, FA Cup or League Cup."



League Cup Will Grow In Status

BY BRIAN MARSHALL

THE Football League Cup—the unsung competition that the leading clubs have cold-shouldered since its inception in 1960—appears to be gaining favour. On the progress made in recent months it is very much on the cards that within a very short space of time there will be a 100 per cent membership.

I feel the attitude of West Bromwich Albion, who reached the final this season at their first attempt, sums up the general feeling that will have to apply to the likes of Spurs, Everton, Manchester United and Arsenal in the months to come.

Mr. Alan Everiss, West Bromwich Albion's astute secretary, says: "The issue which really swayed my board in entering the League Cup for the first time was that this season's winners were pretty well promised by the League that they would be nominated for next season's Fairs Cup competition—provided they were a First Division club.

"We want to be known internationally as we were in the 1954–56 era, and we now have three chances of getting into Europe—by winning the League, the F.A. Cup or the League Cup.

"Of course, there is also the other reason that we must not refuse any opportunity to make money."

Opportunity

Albion, it must be admitted, had ample opportunity to get to the competition at an earlier date. It was only after they saw the amount of money that other Midland clubs were making out of the competition that they too them decided to enter.

In the six seasons that the competition has been operating, a Midland club has participated in the final on five occasions.

In the first season Aston Villa beat Rotherham 3-2. The following year Norwich City beat Rochdale 4-0 in the only final in which a Midland club did not take part. In 1963 Birmingham beat Aston Villa 3-1. Then Leicester City defeated Stoke City 4-3 in another all-Midland final and last season Chelsea took the trophy when they triumphed 3-2 over Leicester City.

West Bromwich Albion, who must have been a little envious of this success being enjoyed by other Midland clubs, decided to enter.

And the outcome? A profit of about £15,000 by the time they reached the final!

For many clubs this amount of money is the difference between success and failure and Albion must now be regretting not entering the competition before this season.

Of course, they have been assisted by several attractive games against Midland opposition. Their first Football League game was a home tie against Walsall, which attracted a record 41,188 attendance. In the two games against Coventry City they played before a 38,000 "gate" at Highfield Road and for the replay at the Hawthorns the figure was 40,694—a firm indication that the big crowds can still be attracted in the Midlands if the matches can appeal to the general public.

Surprising as it may appear, the Walsall game has proved the most difficult for Albion to win. The First Division side were held 1-1 for most of the game and only two late goals gave them victory.

A feature of their play in these matches has been their goal-scoring form and in particular the play of their opportunist outside-right Tony Brown, who has developed into the brightest newcomer in the English game this season.

Brown, labelled Albion's best goalscorer since former England international Johnny Nicholls, has played a major role in the Midland club's Football League success. In seven games he snapped up nine goals—form that has put him on the verge of the England team.

The former Manchester schoolboy, who was a red-hot Manchester United fan when at school, only won his place when outside-right Ken Foggo was badly injured in the league match against Northampton.

Albion manager, Jimmy Hagan, who did not have as experienced reserve winger, called up Brown, who has now occupied every forward line position. Brown, a great fan of Denis Law, admits that he does not find this a disadvantage.

He claims: "Whichever position I fill, I play the same type of game."

Brown, who was 20 in October, joined Albion three years ago. He did not want to join Manchester United because he thought his prospects at Old Trafford would be too limited in view of the talent they possess.

He had an opportunity to join Manchester City but instead accepted a trial with West Bromwich Albion. He liked the surroundings and liked the idea of joining their ground-staff. It is a decision he has not regretted.

An England youth international, he has the natural goal sense which can only be compared with players such as Jimmy Greaves. Although he lines up with the number seven on his back, this in fact means very little.

Close range

As often as not he can be found popping up in the centre-forward position. This season I have seen him score the majority of his goals from close range when he has wandered unobserved in the middle to create havoc with his snap-shooting.

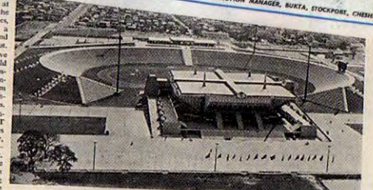
If only the emergence of this goalscoring star, Albion's belate entry into the competition has been well worth while. They have made a lot of money and discovered a new star, who could serve them well for many more seasons to come.

In view of Albion's success there are more than likely Wolves will follow their neighbours into the competition.

● Continued on page 7

Liverpool's skipper and centre-half Ron Yeats (left) leaps to tie tackle West Bromwich Albion's outside-right, Tony Brown, but he is too late to prevent the winger crossing to give the Midland side an early lead over last season's F.A. Cup winners. (B.M.)

WARNING FROM PYONGYANG



The magnificent state built stadium at Phnom Penh, Cambodia, where North Korea qualified for the World Cup Finals. There were capacity crowds of 40,000 for both games with Australia. All accommodation is seated. (A.D.T.)

ELEVEN TWO

Naturally, training alone couldn't advance their game too much—so they play up to 30 international matches every year, exclusively against "friendly" countries such as Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia, Communist China, Burma and North Vietnam. Their record is impressive: of their last 36 internationals they lost only two, both to Burma—and both discreetly admitted to have been "diplomatic defeats". Among their victims are Communist China, Japan and Ghana, to mention only the strongest.

Unknown to western soccer fans—or even writers—the North Koreans often get the help of crack Soviet teams as training partners. Just before they went to Cambodia, they had Spartak Moscow as sparring partners—and held their own against the Soviet side. Earlier in 1965 North Korea registered a major triumph, something that should have been noted—but obviously wasn't—by Australian observers. They won the GANEFO Games (Emerging Forces) held in their capital, Pyongyang, beating Ghana 3-1 in the final and going through the series undefeated.

Their style of play, according to all eyewitnesses, is a modified version of modern Soviet football. They play a kind of 4-2-4, using some upsets in the World broad on crisp, accurate short passing, impeccable stamina—with more purpose, disciplin and team discipline. But they have speed, too: their two star wingers, Han Bong Jin and Kim Seung Gil are true flyers with deadly shots.

During a match they appear to be men without nerves. Everything they do seems mechanical, automatic—and precise. There is no visible effort in their play and it never do their faces go into those well-known grimaces and contortions that soccer players often where display.

Frenzy

However, their fanaticism is expressed before the matches, in the dressing room where, following the usual last minute pep-talk by their coach, they sing patriotic songs and shout themselves into frenzy—I suppose very much in the Herrera style.

Their easy, effortless wins of 6-1 and 3-1 over Australia deeply impressed not only the victims but also some neutral observers. Former French star Jean Vincent, now coaching in Laos, claimed that the Koreans could work much harder in the next few months.

Just how much harder he didn't say. But some of their feats were revealed at subsequent Press conferences. Before the World Cup finals they intend to play "at least" 35 friendly internationals. All during this time the squad will stay together, living in the

World Cup Finals 1966 Predictions by ROGER MACDONALD

IS THIS HOW THEY WILL FINISH?

1 ENGLAND	ENGLAND	ENGLAND	ENGLAND
2 FRANCE	West Germany		
3 Uruguay			
4 Mexico			
1 BRAZIL	BRAZIL	Brazil	
2 HUNGARY			
3 Portugal	USSR		
4 Bulgaria			
1 ARGENTINA	ARGENTINA	Argentina	Italy
2 WEST GERMANY			
3 Spain	France		
4 Switzerland			
1 ITALY	ITALY	ITALY	
2 USSR			
3 Chile	Hungary		
4 North Korea			

Winner: ENGLAND. Runners-up: Italy. Third: Brazil. Fourth: Argentina.

THIS is my preliminary swing at the World Cup. The right to make several alterations or loss of an idea is a few months' time, as injuries and formations in Europe will change the position entirely by Sunday, July 11.

But for the present, England and France must, on home form, be Group One favourites, with Uruguay and Mexico to cross home advantage and are the only serious challenge to the home teams. Mexico should be everyone's dark horse. Uruguay never seem to be totally disorganised to trouble even the far from brilliant French.

West Germany may not be certain of qualifying until their third match against Spain at Villa Park. But I feel they will get through on their home and artistry of Sunstar Herbert Swiderski will play a successful football, but in all their matches Dowdeless Argentina will play peculiar negative football, but remain unbeaten.

Not kind

At in Chile, Group Three looks the strongest—all four teams in contention qualified if the strong had been kinder to them. Brazil is tipped by for the best of the outsiders, if they fully worthy Portugal, who will World Cup experience and are generally more mobile. I expect Brazil to top between of Pele, and Hungary, whose team should be stronger than in 1962, to struggle through. But the Hungarians cannot be happy about the prospect of playing Portugal and Brazil on different grounds within 72 hours.

North Korea may have thrashed Australia, but I fear that even the sadly declining Chile I will cut this little Wonder Soccer fond "Will they be offering only 3-1 against our having to do with Hatch? Either way, the kick-off with my group against the Australians will be forgotten in the hurly-burly of Sunderland, I expect them to beat the Russians there and top Group Four.

Back in Group One, Italy are the probable group leaders—England, Brazil, Argentina and Italy—can also be expected to reach the semi-finals; England, focused with the incentive of playing Portugal in the quarter-finals, Germany, have a fine chance against a country who have never been in the series, France are unlikely to score, but show survive against Argentina, and Brazil have the beating of Bonita if Mazza doesn't be in very more soft pitch.

Wish for less confidence, I tip Italy to best Hungary, ironically, the Italians could have an easier task against Argentina—the only South American team to qualify for the final the score to one exceptional goal.

Of course, I tipped Argentina to overcome Brazil for a place in the Final—the other country holders would in their group they would stay in reserve holiday of the Italians, "Argentina" a match for this purpose if qualification were made for Group Three should be too right for this, and England would prefer to finish first and avoid a Wembley quarter-final.

It is now three years since I first focused on England victory in the World Cup Final, and since Brazil's Pele and Garrincha phoned them from Chile in Europe. So even Brazil may have to be content with third place in the finals. For I believe England will win—on the strength of an unbeaten record against the Italians. I only wish that I could predict Scotland, and not Italy, as their opponents in the semi-finals.

Latest Betting:

Brazil	9-4 favourites
England	9-2
Argentina	11-2
Italy	8-1
USSR	8-1
Portugal	16-1 etc.

THE DRAW DISSECTED

GROUPS OF THE WORLD CUP FINALS IN JULY

GROUP I (LONDON)
ENGLAND
FRANCE
URUGUAY
MEXICO

GROUP II (MIDLANDS)
ARGENTINA
WEST GERMANY
SPAIN
SWITZERLAND

GROUP III (NORTH-WEST)
BRAZIL
HUNGARY
PORTUGAL
BULGARIA

GROUP IV (NORTH-EAST)
ITALY
RUSSIA
CHILE
NORTH KOREA

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